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THE  
Bishop of SARUM's  
FOUR TREATISES.

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Four Discourses  
Delivered to the  
**CLERGY**  
OF THE

**Imprimatur,**

Jan. 22. 1693.

**J. O. CANT.**

**GILBERT**, Lord Bishop of Exeter

Printed for Richard Church, at  
the Rose and Crown in St. Pauls  
Church-yard, MDCXCIII.

Four Discourses  
Delivered to the  
**CLERGY**  
OF THE  
Diocess of *SARUM*,

CONCERNING

- I. The Truth of the Christian Religion.
- II. The Divinity and Death of Christ.
- III. The Infallibility and Authority of the Church.
- IV. The Obligations to continue in the Communion of the Church.

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By the Right Reverend Father in God,  
*GILBERT*, Lord Bishop of *Sarum*.

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*L O N D O N :*

Printed for *Richard Chiswell*, at  
the *Rose and Crown* in *St. Paul's*  
Church-yard. *MDCXCIV.*

Four Discourses

CLERGY

Diocese of Sarum

**T**he first discourse is upon the  
power of the keys and the  
of the church. The second  
is upon the same subject.  
The third is upon the  
power of the keys and the  
of the church. The fourth  
is upon the same subject.  
The fifth is upon the  
power of the keys and the  
of the church. The sixth  
is upon the same subject.  
The seventh is upon the  
power of the keys and the  
of the church. The eighth  
is upon the same subject.  
The ninth is upon the  
power of the keys and the  
of the church. The tenth  
is upon the same subject.

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TO THE  
CLERGY  
OF THE  
Diocess of SARUM.

My Reverend and dear Brethren,

**T**These Discourses were at first prepared for you, and were delivered to you among a great many more on other Subjects on several occasions: they were so well received by you, that many of you desired that you might have them copied out for a more lasting use. This has set me on publishing these that follow, they relating to Four different sorts of men with whom you may be engaged.



## To the Clergy of

*The first is against Atheists and Libertines, who grow to be so bold and insolent, that it is of the last Importance, that you should be well furnish'd with Answers to those Objections with which they make the greatest noise. This is the Pest of the Age we live in, the most dangerous as well as the most contagious of all others: It strikes at all, and corrupts the whole Man, as well as it dissolves all the bonds of Nature and Society. This promises such an Indemnity, and gives so entire a liberty, that depraved Inclinations and Affections will be always of its side; and it has some specious things to alledge, the Novelty and Boldness of which, makes them pass for Wit and Good Humour, which will be always taking to those who want and desire supports and excuses for sins. Upon all these accounts, and chiefly upon the fatal progress which this Blasphemous Spirit of Infidelity has made among us, it becomes us to consider these matters well, that we may be thoroughly acquainted with all those depths of Satan, and know what to answer to all those false shews of Wit or Reason, as well as to the more petulant demands by which that prophane Crew study to undermine and beat down all Religion.*

One



One of their common Topicks, is the decrying all Mysteries; and in this they fall in to the same opposition with the Socinians, tho upon very different designs. For the Socinians run down all Mysteries, and think they can make it appear, That those passages of Scripture by which they are commonly proved, have another meaning; whereas Libertines do it, being persuaded that they are indeed contained in the Scriptures; and therefore they hope that they will gain their main end of decrying all Revealed Religion, if strong prejudices are once formed against Mysteries; and yet they are at the same time consider'd as parts of the Christian Religion, and are believed to be contain'd in the Scriptures. I must also do this right to the Socinians, as to own that their Rules in Morality are exact and severe; that they are generally men of Probity, Justice and Charity, and seem to be very much in earnest in pressing the obligations to very high degrees of Virtue. Tet their denying all secret Assistances, must cut off the Exercises of many Devotions, that give a softness and tenderness to the mind; which if once extinguish'd, it must of necessity draw after it a dry flatness over all a man's thoughts

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and powers; their denying the certainty of God's foreseeing all future events that depend upon the freedom of a man's Will, must very much weaken our Confidence in God, our patience under all misfortunes, and our expectations of a deliverance in due time. Their Notions of another state, do also take off much of the terror under which Bad men ought to be kept, and lessen the Joys of Good men. On all these accounts, their Opinions seem to have a great Influence upon practice; but with relation to the great Article of Christianity concerning the Person and sufferings of Jesus Christ, their Doctrine gives so different a view of this Religion in its most important Head, that either we have been guilty of a most Irreligious prophanation, in esteeming one to be God, and giving him all the Acknowledgments and Adorations that belong to the Great and Eternal God, who yet is a meer Creature; or they must be no less guilty, who if he be the Great and the True God, do look on him only as a Creature, and yet offer him all divine Honor and Worship: and if his Death was only a pattern, or any thing else than a true propitiatory Sacrifice, then we who look on it as our Propitiation and Redemp-  
tion,

tion, who claim and trust to it, as our Ransom and Atonement, do very impiously raise its value beyond the Truth, and fix our Confidence, with relation to our Peace with God, upon a false foundation. Whereas on the other hand, If God has set forth his death as a propitiation for the forgiveness of sin, then they are guilty of black Ingratitude, and of defeating the chief design of the Gospel, who so far detract from its value, as to reckon it only a pattern of dying, a confirmation of the Gospel, and a necessary preliminary to a Resurrection. Upon all these accounts it is that I could never understand the Pacificatory Doctrines of those who think that these are questions in which a diversity of Opinions may well be endured without disturbing the Peace of the Church, or breaking Communion about them. They seem to be the Fundamentals of Christianity, and therefore I thought it was very necessary for me to give you a full and clear Instruction in this matter.

The 3d. Discourse relates to that upon which the whole Cause of Popery turns; for if they are Infallible, it is to no purpose to dispute about any thing else: and if they are fallible, their pretending to Infallibility

*Infallibility, is of it self a just prejudice against their whole Church, and against all their other Doctrines, when they claim to so high an authority without good grounds. Since therefore this is the most Important part of all our Controversies with that Church, and since it is that to which they always turn themselves, by which they gain Proselytes, and establish their own Votaries, and set them out of the reach of all Conviction; the understanding of this matter in its full extent, seems to be a very necessary piece of study. We are apt upon a little Interval of quiet to forget the practices of that Church; and because we do not think of them, we may be apt to fancy that they think as little of us: but they do still pursue their point with an unwearied diligence. They never give over, but when one design fails, they either study to retrieve it, or to set another on foot, with an Industry that ought to awaken us, and keep us always on our guard. The Numbers of their Emissaries are great, and their Zeal is ever warm and active; therefore we must never lose sight of them; and above all the other points of Controversy, we must study to be most particularly conversant in this, and expert at the management of it.*

*The*



*The Fourth Discourse relates to the various Bodies of the Dissenters among us, and all the different grounds upon which they separate from us. The Toleration that the Law gives them, does not alter the nature of things, nor make an unjust Separation to be one whit the lawfuller than it was when they were under a severer Toke. The Law only gives a Civil Impunity, and does not punish: But the Cause of the Separation is the same that it was, and is neither better nor worse, whether the Separation is punished or not. They are now left to themselves, and are so much the freer in their choice, the less restraint is put upon them. Therefore it was never more seasonable than it is now, to set the whole matter in a true light before all that may be concerned in it, that they may weigh it the more impartially: And the less uneasy we seem to be, at the ease which the Law gives them, we may have thereby the greater advantages in endeavouring to bring them back to the Communion of the Church, by shewing both their obligations to it, and the weakness of those Reasons which have led them to depart from it.*

*I think*



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*I think it is not necessary to say more, for justifying the choice that I have made of these four Heads, as the first Essay that I offer you, of a great many other Discourses, with which I have entertained you, when I have desired you to meet me in the several parts and different Divisions of my Diocess: Some head of Divinity being proposed as the Subject of a Conference, I have enlarged upon a great many among you, and have laid before you all that my Studies and Observation could suggest; and after that, have led you to discourse freely upon it. This has seemed to me a proper method for awakening your Enquiries, and for encreasing your Knowledge: And those meetings have been so well kept by you, and the Discourses so carefully attended to, that it has given me no small encouragement to go on still in the same method. And as your thinking that you have profited by my Labours, is a full and rich recompence, that does abundantly overbalance any pains they may put me to: So it is for your sake that I do now publish these Discourses; and as they prove acceptable or useful to you, I may, perhaps, publish others hereafter.*

Cer-

Certainly, next to a true sense of Divine Matters, and the inward belief and impressions of Religion, Study, and a desire of useful knowledge, is that which becomes our Profession the best. It is that which enables us both to understand our business, and to do our duty. It is the noblest entertainment, and the best preservative from idleness, and from all that dulness and weariness, all those excesses and disorders that arise out of it. The mind will be always working, and if we do not let it fly at nobler game, it will either sink into a feebleness and stupidity, or look out for such Diversions as do offer themselves, without a scrupulous regard to their unsuitableness to our Character. These draw men down to a vicious familiarity with bad men, and do fatally engage many to share with them in bad practises: either they make us much the worse, or at least we seem to be so to others, when we throw away much of our time in levities, which do often end in gross Immoralities. In which the World will be apt to give us a large share, often without a pretence, but to be sure, if there is the least shadow for it, the chief part of the blame will be cast

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*cast on us. Nor will it be easy for us to be blameless, and without rebuke, unless we maintain the other part of the Character given by St. Paul, that as becomes the sons of God, we shine as lights in the world. And I may well conclude, That a serious application to study, is the best fence, both of the Probity, and of the Reputation of a Clergy-man: It both teaches himself all the parts of his duty, and creates to him that esteem which is necessary to support him in the discharge of it.*

*And therefore, my dear Brethren, I do with all possible Earnestness call upon you, to study to maintain the high Reputation for Learning, of which the Clergy of this Church has been so long possessed; and to give your selves time and leisure to peruse and digest the Learned Productions of those Great Men among us; and not to be proud, or to boast that we belong to a Body that has produced men so deservedly admired, both by Friends and Enemies, while we our selves are so little like them, that we are not a whit the wiser or the learned for all that they have left us. Some hours every*

ry day well placed would soon bring us under such habits, that it would not be easy, if possible, for us to live out of all commerce with Learning, and the learned World. I know the unhappy state of many depauperated Benefices, puts it out of the Incumbent's power to furnish themselves with Books; as much as their narrow Circumstances indispose them for making use of them, if they had them. This is a crying grievance, and looks too like a scorn put on the Gospel, when those who minister in Spiritual things are so slenderly supplied in Temporals, that nothing but extreme Necessity can induce men to serve in such Cures, who are put to wrestle still with the same necessity, especially if they have Families that grow upon them. But as we have at present just grounds to hope, and to give you cause likewise to hope, that if God blesses us with calm and settled times, effectual Remedies should be found out to that great misery, under which many of you languish, which must needs give very sad and afflicting thoughts to those who observe it, and who ought to watch over you, and to take care of you; so the best method to move our Princes, and to dispose the Nation to take pity



on you, is for you to take heed to your selves, and to the flocks that are committed to you; to follow your Studies and your Labours more diligently, and to raise your own Character by your Exemplary Lives, and the painful discharge of your Duties. This, and this only, will draw down the blessings of Heaven upon your Persons, and your Labours; this will make your very Enemies to be at peace with you, and will force those who do now despise you, to esteem you, and to count you worthy of double honour, of a larger and easier subsistence.

I will employ the rest of this Discourse in pressing upon you one great part of your duty, in which, as I am glad that so many among you set a good Example to their Brethren, so I do earnestly wish that all the rest may follow it: It is, To express an affectionate and hearty zeal for their Majesties, and their Government; and to endeavour to keep your people always in mind of the extream Miseries, as well as of the visible Dangers of Popery and Tyranny. This must still be remembred as a lasting honour to this Church, That some years ago, there was in a day of trial, so noble an Opposition  
given



given to that Religion, and to the steps that were then made to bring it in upon us. We are still in the struggle, and are strangely mistaken, if we imagine the Danger is past. We plainly see the Clouds return after the Rain; and a Relapse into that State would make the latter end much worse than the beginning: The Hope which then supported, and afterwards delivered us, would no more soften our Miseries with the prospect of better times. The Rage, as well as the Power of our Enemies, would be much encreased; and there is no doubt to be made, but that those who have no Religion, whose numbers, God knows, do swell vastly, would hope to atone for all that has been done with the change of their No-Religion, for that to which their Interest should lead them. And if ever God, for our great and crying Sins, is provoked to visit us in so terrible a manner; we, who have been hitherto the most favoured of all the Churches of God, must become the most miserable. Whither can we fly for shelter, or where can we promise our selves either Retreat or Relief?

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*The prospect of such a Calamity seems to be one of the blackest of all that has been since the World begun; and yet how tamely do many look for it; while others with a fury that is as much without bounds, as it is without sense, are endeavouring to bring on that evil day; to make the Nation grow weary of its Deliverance, and present Quiet, and return back into Egypt. While they spread so many False Reports, with a Spite that is as restless as it is insolent; shall we at such a time stand as neutral, and unconcerned, while all is at stake? Shall it be said, That whereas some years ago, during the Debates concerning the Exclusion, we sided so openly, and with a Zeal that shewed it self on all occasions, and in Instances which were better forgotten than remembred; yet now when all that can concern us, either as we are men, and Englishmen, or as we are Christians, and the Ministers of the Church of England, is in such eminent danger, we seem to let all Parties fight it out the best they can, while we only do what is enjoined, and express neither affection nor zeal.*

*I will*

*I will not offer to say any thing to convince you of the Lawfulness of the present Constitution: For I cannot admit so bad a thought of any of you, as to imagine that you could take the Oaths, and continue to perform Divine Offices, Ordinary and Extraordinary, unless you were fully satisfied in your Consciences concerning the Lawfulness both of the one and of the other. This is so black an Imputation, to suppose that men of common Probity, not to say, men that ought to be the Paterns, as well as the Instructors of others, should swear an Oath, and adhere so long to it, which is an interpretative renewing of it, ever till it is openly retracted, and should in those frequent returns of daily Prayers, besides the special Offices of Fasts and Thanksgiving-days, offer up Devotions to God contrary to their Persuasions, that no man is capable of so heinous, and so continued a Prevarication, unless he is either a determinate Atheist, or a man of a seared and hardned Conscience. Now as this is of so odious a nature, that indeed it is not easy to find words severe enough to set it out by; so supposing men once convinced of the Lawfulness*

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*of our present Situation, it is very extraordinary if they are cold and unconcerned in a Point, which when it is once yielded to be lawful, is unquestionably of the greatest importance and consequence possible.*

*If Liberty and Religion are valuable things; and if they are not, what is valuable? If the maintaining the Purity of the Christian Religion, free from Idolatry and Superstition, from Imposture and Cruelty; if the maintaining a Church that without partiality, is to be preferred to any Church now in the World; and if the keeping out of a Religion, which is without partiality the worst of any that carries the Name of Christ; If the preserving a Government that is just and mild, that is guided by Law, and that maintains Property, and that leaves Mankind to all the Liberties of a free-born Nature, and of a well Constituted Society: And if the withstanding an Absolute and Despotical, an Arbitrary and Violent Tyranny, that tramples on all things Sacred and Human, that oppresses Liberty, and destroys Property, and that makes men Slaves, and treats them as brute Beasts; If, I say,*

*all*



*all these things are well weighed, then we must conclude, That we owe the utmost degrees of affection and zeal to Their Majesties, and to Their Government: We ought to make all our People sensible, both of the Happiness that we do now enjoy, and of the Miseries that we are preserved from, by Their means, and under Their Protection. We ought to set Popery and Slavery before them in their true Colours, with all the light and life that we can give them: We ought to set our selves against those false Brethren, that pretend they are of the Church of England, but are not; and are of the Synagogue of Satan, which in its strict notion signifying an Adversary, we may without any breach of Charity affirm, that they associate themselves to the Enemy of our Nation, and of our Religion; whose Person, Government, Forces and Successes, they are always magnifying, on design to intimidate such as can be wrought on by their false Surmises. These things we ought to repress and oppose on all occasions with the Spirit and Courage that such matters require.*



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*It is Stupidity and not Patience to be cold and luke-warm, while England and the Protestant Religion are in the last struggles whether they must live or die. If God does not bless so good a Cause in all the steps it makes, with the success that we ought to desire and pray for; we should teach our people not to murmur, nor aggravate matters, not to sink or despond, but to consider how much our sins have provoked God's Wrath, how small a share we bear of those devouring Calamities that have ruin'd so great a part of Europe; while we only bear the Charge, but feel few of the Miseries of War. If some years are less prosperous than others have been, we ought to reflect on former Successes, and the ill use that we have made of them, which may have provoked God to change his methods: and yet take all together, it must be acknowledged, that we have had of late more publick Blessings and fewer Misfortunes, than any Nation under Heaven. Can one reflect on the Blasphemy and Infidelity, the dissolution of all good Morals, and the Impieties and Vices of all sorts that are among us, and not wonder rather, that we have not been made a scene of Earthquakes and*

*and Ruins, as Sicily, Malta, and Jamaica have of late been. It is to these sins that we ought to turn the minds of our people, when they are at any time dejected with ill success; we ought to call upon them to repent of, and to reform their ways: and when that is done, or even set about, we may then hope that God will change his methods towards us; and continue his Gospel among us, together with the Blessings of a Just and Wise Government, and of Peace and Plenty.*

*These are Subjects on which we ought to dwell much, and preach often. But that I may not dismiss this matter, without any thing that looks like an Argument; I will open to you two great Precedents, which you have often heard me enlarge on with much seeming satisfaction: and because you have thought that I laid them out in a more particular manner, than you had otherwise met with them; I will now spread them out before you: and that the rather, because Arguments from Examples, and authorised practices, have upon many accounts a stronger Influence, than general reasonings. Matters of fact are easier apprehended, and more capable of full proof, than points of speculation; which do more*

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easily

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*easily bend to any turn, that a man of Wit may give them, than meer facts, which are stubborn and sullen.*

*The first of these is taken from the History of the Maccabees, which I desire you will consider by these steps. That the Jews became the Subjects of the Kings of Babylon by the Entire Conquest which Nebuchadnezzar made of that Nation; that after the end of 70 Tears, they continu'd to be subject to Cyrus, who tho he sent them back to rebuild their Temple, and tho his Successors suffer'd them both to finish that, and to rebuild and enclose Jerusalem, yet they continu'd still to be the Subjects of the Kings of Persia; this was transferred to Alexander the Great, when he conquer'd that Empire: and finally, they fell to the share of the Kings of Syria, and were their Subjects above 140 Tears. They proved hard masters to them: Antiochus Epiphanes robb'd the Temple in the 143 Tear of the Seleucida; a great Massacre followed; but these were particular acts of Tyranny; and so tho there was great mourning upon this, yet it was submitted to: for certainly the Peace of Mankind, and the Order of the World require, that special acts of malversation, and*

*I Macc. i.  
20, 24, 25.*

and even of Tyranny, should be born, rather than that we should shake an established Constitution: But in the year 145. he went on to a total Subversion of their Religion, by an Edict which required V. 41. that they should forsake their Law, and become one people with him: In pur- V. 54.  
V. 57.suance of which, the Altar at Jerusalem was defiled; Idolatrous Altars were set up in all their Cities, and every man was to be put to death that still adhered to the Law of Moses. Here then were Subjects brought under a general sentence of death, unless they should depart from the Laws of God; special Oppressions and violent Acts of Cruelty were submitted to; but when they saw themselves involved all in the same common fate, they defended themselves.

Mattathias not only refused to join in the Idolatry that they had set up, but killed both him that went to offer the Sacrifice, and likewise the King's Commissioner; 2. ch. 24,  
25. upon which the Historian adds this Reflection, Thus dealt he zealously for the Law of God, like Phinehas; he a- V. 26.  
nimated his Children to follow his Example, and to trust in God; but he vouched  
no



V. 50.

V. 64.

V. 67, 68.

4. Macc.  
46.

*no immediate warrant that he had from God: he charged his Children to be zealous for the Law, and to give their Lives for the Covenant of their Fathers; to be valiant, and to shew themselves men in behalf of it, for by it you shall obtain glory; and he ordered them to take unto them all that observed the Law, and to revenge the wrong of their people; to Recompence fully the Heathen, and to take heed to the Commandment of the Law. Upon this followed the Wars of the Maccabees, in which they never pretended to any special Authority from any Prophet: On the contrary, their History tells us, That they laid up the Stones of the Altar, that had been profaned by Idolatry, in a convenient place, till a Prophet should come to shew what should be done with them. Thus then we see Subjects defend themselves against their Prince, when he designed a total Subversion of their Religion: and for this they vouched no immediate nor extraordinary Authority.*

*But to give this Argument its entire force, We must next see upon what reason we may conclude, that this was a justifiable, and by consequence an imitable Action.*

*Action.* As for this, tho I think it is scarce necessary to enlarge much on an Apology for the Maccabees, their Wars having born such a venerable sound in a course of so many Ages; yet to pursue the matter fully, we find a Prophecy concerning them in Daniel, which is by all Commentators Ancient and Modern, applied to them, that alone seems to import a full Justification of them; after mention is made of a King that should defile the Sanctuary, and take away the daily Sacrifice, and set upon it the abomination that maketh desolate; to that, this is added, and such as do wickedly against the Covenant, shall be corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God, shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people, shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil many days: and when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help; but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. As these words import a plain prediction, in terms of approbation of the Wars of the Maccabees, so all the Commentators

11. Dan.  
31, 32, 33,  
34.  
that

*that I have yet seen, without exception, do apply them to them.*

11. Heb.  
34.

Art. 6.

*There are also many Commentators who do apply likewise to them, those words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Who out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the Armies of the Aliens: And there is a particular resemblance observed between these words, and some Phrases that occur in the Books of the Maccabees: Yet I confess those words are not so express as the former, nor are they so Universally expounded in this sense. But to conclude this matter, The Authority of those Books, as it is an Argument of full force against those who acknowledge them to be Canonical; so since by the Articles of our Church, these Books are to be read for example of Life, and for the Instruction of manners; tho it doth not apply them to establish any Doctrine: and since we read so many Lessons taken out of the Apocrypha: These must be acknowledged to be Books of great, tho not of Divine Authority. And tho according to the Article of our Church, the*  
arguing

arguing from any one passage in them is not to be allowed; yet if Subjects standing on their own defence, in the case of a total Subversion, is to be esteemed Rebellion, then we bind up with our Bibles, and recommend to our people, two Books that set out a History with great pomp, and with an Air of much Piety, which was no other than a downright Rebellion.

To this, the only answer that I have ever yet seen made, is, That the Jewish Dispensation being founded on Temporal Promises, whereas the Christian Religion is a Doctrine of the Cross, things of this kind might have been lawful among them, tho they are not so to us: and that the rather, because by a Practice that was authorised, from the Example of Phinehas, and the praise given him for it, private men might among the Jews, when the Magistrate was remiss, fall upon Offenders, and punish them, especially in the case of Idolatry. This is all that seems to be offered with any colour of Reason, to take off the Argument from the practice of the Maccabees: and therefore the considering and stating it aright, will determine the whole matter.

First,



*First then, The true Arguments against Resistance being drawn from the Magistrates having the sword from God, together with all the Topicks that belong to that head, they are equally obligatory to all Nations, and all Religions; it being no part of any special Doctrine delivered in the New Testament, but arising from the Attributes of God, and the Peace and Order of the World, which did bind Jews as well as Christians: tho there are indeed Specialties in the Christian Religion, that do enforce this the more, and aggravate the transgression of it more apparently. So that if Subjects defending themselves in the case of a Total Subversion, (it must ever be remembred, that I am now only arguing upon this Supposition) is the sin of Rebellion, it was a sin to the Jews, to the Maccabees in particular, as well as it is a sin to Christians. As for that of the Zealots, tho at first appearance it seems to be of some force, yet when examined it will be found to have very little in it. If we consider the first Authorities for Zealots, we shall find, that the Jews stretched this matter beyond all bounds; so that to their mistakes  
about*

about it, they owed a great part of their last fatal Miseries, which ended in their ruin. This matter has been also too implicitly taken by many Christian Writers from them. The first beginning of Zealorism was in the Instance of Phinehas his killing Zimri and Cosbi; but before this was done, Moses, who was the chief Ruler, did command all the Judges of Israel, that every one should slay his men that were joined to Baal-Peor. Phinehas was one of these Judges; for as Eleazar had been set over the Tribe of Levi when his Father was High-Priest, so Aaron being dead at this time, and Eleazar made High-Priest in his stead, Phinehas was now over the Tribe of Levi; and thus Moses's Command was in particular directed to him; therefore though the Zeal with which he executed it, was highly acceptable to God, yet it was exactly Regular, since Moses had given a general Order for it.

After this, followed some Instances of Men eminently authorized by God, by the Gifts of Prophecy and Miracles, who did in some Cases punish Idolaters; such was Samuel's hewing Agag in pieces, in execution of the Divine Command; and Elijah's

25. Num.

5.

3. Num.

32.

20. Num.

28.

1 Sam.

15. 33.

1 Kings  
18. 40.

jah's ordering all the Priests of Baal to be killed, after he had by an astonishing Miracle proved that Jehovah was the true God, and that he was his Prophet. This was suitable to their Dispensation, which being a Theocracy, an authorized Prophet might well have entred upon the Functions of the Magistrate, when the King himself was in fault, and the Law was openly profaned. Upon the same grounds our Saviour, after his Miracles had openly declared that he was sent of God, did whip the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, when they had profaned the Court of the Gentiles, and had made that House of Prayer a Den of Thieves.

21. Mat.  
13.

Thus it is plain, That none of the Presidents from the Zealots of the Old Testament, could justify private Men, such as Mattathias and his Children, to do any thing that was of it self irregular and unlawful. Phinehas his practice was a Precedent for acting in the matters of their Law with much spirit and courage, but it could not justify any man who should presume to do that, which was not otherwise lawful for him to do ; and  
thogh

though the Spirit of the Christian Religion is very different from the Spirit by which Elijah and other Prophets under the Old Testament were acted; as our Saviour told his Disciples, particularly in this, that whereas in the one, Prophets did immediately by Miracle, or otherwise, punish some Offenders; in the other, all was to be managed with a Spirit of Gentleness and Charity; yet after all, the lasting Rules of Morality and Human Society, were the same then that they are now.

This Instance, I think, does fully justify those who, seeing a total Subversion of our Religion so far advanced, that the Pope's Authority was publicly owned, and that all the Laws that secured it, were declared to be under a Dispensing Power, which was in itself a total Subversion of our Constitution, did think it lawful to accept of a Deliverance, to concur in it, and to assist towards it.

The other Instance is taken from the first beginnings of Christianity's being  
b
the



## To the Clergy of

*the Legal and Authorized Religion of the Roman Empire; and from the first Council that is esteemed General, where a Precedent is laid down that is no less full for justifying those, who tho they did not concur in procuring our Deliverance, yet have since closed in it, with all humble Gratitude and Obedience to those whom God made the Instruments in so great a Work.*

*After Constantine and Licinius had given out those Edicts at Milan, by which the Christians had full liberty both for their Belief and Worship, and had all the Rights and Immunities of other Corporations granted them, Licinius being still in his heart an Enemy to that Religion, began in the Year 319. to persecute the Christians: He durst not, for fear of Constantine, fall upon them openly; but his Intentions being well understood by his Ministers, the Governours of the Provinces committed in many places great Cruelties. He likewise turned the Christians first out of his Household, and next out of all his Armies. He*  
made

Euf. Chron.  
Theoph.  
Anonim.  
Valef.

Euf. l. 10.  
c. 8.

made a Law against relieving such as were in Prison, by which those who relieved them were to be punished as Complices of their Crimes. He apprehending that most of the Bishops wist well to Constantine, and that in their hearts they were set against himself, went on, by degrees, in his design against them; He, by one Edict, forbade the Bishops to meet together, or to meddle with the Concerns of one another's Churches. By another, he designed to expose them to Scandal and Scorn. He forbade Men and Women to meet together to worship God, or Bishops to visit Women; or Women to come to be instructed in their Schools; and appointed that Women only should instruct Women. He also forbade their holding Assemblies within Cities, and ordered them to meet in the open Fields. Some Churches were pulled down by his Orders, and others were shut up; and his first Successes made him resolve on a general Persecution: For not only Eusebius, but both Socrates, Sozomen, and several other Writers, do all affirm, That there was no general Persecution begun, but that

Enf. de  
Vit. Con.  
l. 1. c. 5.

c. 53.

Enf. l. 10.  
c. 8.

De vit.  
Con. l. 2.  
c. 2.

Cap. 3.

there were visible steps made towards it. When all this was represented to Constantine, he was much affected with it; and resolved to help the oppressed,

Εὐτροπίου  
καὶ ὁμοίων.

and thought it was a pious and holy Action to save a multitude, by the destroying of one person: For he saw no other way was left to relieve the oppressed; and his engaging in a

Euf. l. 10.  
c. 8.

War with Licinius, was by the Bishops of the East, that is, Licinius's own Subjects, ascribed to an immediate Conduct and Providence of God. It is true,

Lib. 10.

Eutropius puts this upon Constantine's Ambition, and his aspiring to be the single Monarch of the World: This is also insinuated by Aurelius Victor,

Principa-  
rum totius  
Orbis af-  
fectans.

and more fully set out by Zosimus; whose hatred both of Constantine, and of the Christian Religion, breaks out into so many Partialities, unbecoming an Historian, and engages him into so many Stories that are evidently false, that little regard is due to any thing he says.

I will not enlarge upon the War that followed; only I must observe, That  
the

tho Constantine as the Senior Emperour, had the precedence of Licinius; yet he had no sort of Authority over him: So here two Princes, both equally Sovereigns of the Roman Empire, Colleagues and Brothers-in-Law, for Licinius had married Constantine's Sister, were engaged in a War: the quarrel was not a general persecution; but such steps made, as did plainly discover there was one intended. A Peace soon after followed. The Cement of it was, The declaring Licinius's Son Licinian Cæsar, who was then 21 years of Age; this put him in the Succession. But a second Rupture followed quickly after that. Licinius's hatred to the Christians being rather encreased than abated, since he observed that they all loved Constantine; This proved fatal to Licinius, for he was totally defeated at Adrianople the 3d. of July 324. and after some fruitless Attempts, he was forced to put himself in Constantines hands, on the 18th. of September following. Whereupon he was sent to live a private man at Thessalonica:



but Constantine understanding that he could not rest, ordered him to be put to death, in the beginning of the Year 325. Now we are in the next place to see what was the sense of the whole Church, of this Trans-action: I confess, we ought not to take it singly from Eusebius, for he is rather a perpetual Encomiast of Constantine, than his Historian; but we have a much more certain and Authentic Authority for this: Constantine in the same year in which he had put Licinius to death, and had taken no notice of Licinian, tho' but a year before made Cæsar by his own Act, called the first General Council to meet at Nice: For in his Speech to them, he tells them, That he had given Orders to call them together, as soon as he had overcome the Tyranny. The Council made no Exceptions to Constantine as an Invader; they did neither enquire after Licinian, nor complain of Licinius's Fate: On the contrary, When Constantine came in and harangued them, Eustathius of Antioch did entertain him with  
a Pa-

Euf. Vit.  
Const.  
l. 3. c. 12.

a Panegyrick, full of high Commendations; and another seems to have been made by Eusebius, blessing Almighty God upon his account; which Speeches pronounced in full Council, are at least a strong Presumption, that they all approved of the War, and rejoiced in the deliverance. This is yet more evident from the 11th. Canon of the Council, in which they reflect upon the late Tyranny of Licinius, which shews that tho his death, and the ruin of his Family, must have naturally given some Compassion for one that was then scarce cold, and that had so lately been their Prince: for almost that whole Council consisted of those who had been the Bishops in his share of the Empire; yet they considered the danger they and their Religion had been in under him, and their deliverance by Constantine, as vastly superiour to their Ties to him; so that there was an Universal Joy over the whole East upon the Successes of Constantine.

Theod 17.

De Vit.

Const. 13.

c. 11.

104d

Theod.  
l. i. c. 20.

The having adhered to Licinius, and taking part with him in the War, tho' he was then actually their Prince, was a matter of such Scandal and Infamy, that Constantine in a Letter which he writ to the Nicomedians against Eusebius their Bishop, reproaches him with this, "That he had been  
" always in Licinius's Councils and  
" Secrets, that he had all along stuck  
" to him, and had treated himself  
" with Reproach; that he had im-  
" ployed Spies to procure Intelligence  
" to Licinius, and that he had given  
" him all sort of Assistance, except  
" the bearing of Arms for him: all  
" which Constantine affirms he is rea-  
" dy to prove, by some Priests and  
" Deacons who had adhered to Euse-  
" bius, and whom he had taken Pri-  
" soners. And thus we see what the  
sense of the whole Church in one of  
its best Ages, and of the first General  
Council, was of a Deliverance procur-  
ed by one Sovereign Prince's attack-  
ing, dethroning, and possessing himself  
of the Empire of another, who had

not.

not yet set on foot a General Persecution, but had only violated the Laws which the Christians had for the security of their Religion, had committed many Acts of Injustice and Violence against them; and had declared his Intentions so visibly, that there was all possible reason to conclude that a General Persecution was coming on. Not a Bishop, nor a Priest, stood out against Constantine; not so much as a private Christian was of Licinius's Party: All went in to the Revolution, and rejoiced in their Deliverance.

I will not go on to shew how parallel that Case was to ours; the attempt were as needless, as it might seem invidious: Only I may well conclude, That it is not easy to imagine how we can be better assured of the sense of the whole Church in any point, than we are of the sense of the Christians of that Age, in this particular.

I have



*I have not said any thing to justify my putting Constantine's prevailing over Licinius in the Year immediately before the Council of Nice, tho Baronius puts it six before it. But it is visible that he has disordered the whole History of Constantine, on design to maintain his being baptized at Rome, with other unjustifiable things; besides that, Eusebius's Chronology in this particular, as it is of authority of it self, without any other support, so it is fully confirmed by the dates of some Laws in the Code, and several other Circumstances.*

*It should be hoped that so great and so plain a Precedent should conclude those who have made the Primitive Church their Pattern; and who have always reckoned this one of the special Glories of the Church of England, that she built upon, and conformed her self to the first Ages of Christianity. I have now opened these two Precedents very particularly to  
you;*

you; they seemed to weigh much with you when I have laid them out to you in some Conferences that I have held with you upon this Subject. I hope you will both feel the force that is in them, and will be able to manage them with more advantage now that you have them lying before you.

To conclude all. I do charge you by all the Authority I have over you, and beseech you by all the Interest that I have in you, to set your selves wholly to your Studies and Labours; to be earnest in Prayer, to continue in it, and to join fasting with it: Search the Scriptures diligently, give your selves to reading and meditation, and be you wholly in them; that so your profiting may appear unto all men; and watch over the Flock committed to your charge: Be instant in season, and out of season; to instruct, admonish, exhort and reprove; and by so doing, you shall both save your selves, and them that hear you: In doing these things,

## To the Clergy of

*things, you shall always have the most  
constant Assistance, and the most ear-  
nest Prayers of,*

8. Decem.  
1693.

My Reverend

and Dear Brethren,

Your most Affectionate Brother, and

Humble Servant in the Lord,

G. SARUM.

THE

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THE  
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# PART I.

## Concerning the

# TRUTH

OF THE

# Christian Religion.



HERE is not any one thing that we ought to enquire into with so peculiar an exactness, as the truth of that Religion which we believe; nor is there any thing

in which we ought to be so conversant, and to which we should be so well prepared, as to defend this great Argument, the foundation of our Faith and Hope. It is a very preposterous way of study to be able to argue about the retail of our Religion ; I mean the particular Do-

B

ctrines



*Concerning the Truth*

crines of it, and the subdivisions into which it is broken, and not to know how to maintain it in gross; when the truth of it is called in question, either in the petulant way of profane Liberty, or with the subtilties of Philosophy and Criticism. We may have to do with both in the Age in which we live.

The Divisions among Christians have made the World conclude, that they had a right to prove all things, that so they may know how to hold fast that which is good. The Enthusiasms and Hypocrisies of some, and the Looseness and Disorders among others; the superstitious magnifying of small matters, and the contending eagerly for them, while the greater, as well as the more useful and more uncontroverted Rules have been too visibly and generally neglected; have furnished them with prejudices, that must be confessed to be but too specious and plausible: And I wish some of us may not have contributed, to make many think we are scarce in earnest in arguing for the truth of our Religion, while our Lives do but too openly testify that we do not firmly believe our own Arguments.

The

The great Author of our Religion has left this woe upon the World, that *offences must come*; and the heaviest part of that woe will certainly fall upon those by *whom they come*. But when we are enquiring into so Important a matter, it certainly becomes us to free our minds from prejudices as much as we can: And neither to suffer our selves to be possessed by the first Impressions that Education made upon us, nor by our present Stations and Engagements on the one hand; nor to be led away by the fury of our Appetites and Passions, and the bad Examples that the World abounds in on the other hand: That so we may more freely search after Truth, and both find it out, and follow it.

As a preamble to what is to come afterwards, let us look into our Natures; and see if we do not feel a Principle within us that both thinks and acts freely, which is totally different from matter, which neither thinks nor chuses. This Principle then feels that its thoughts do direct its freedom in all that it does, and therefore is capable of good or evil, of reward and punishment. The more distinctly that it thinks, and the more exactly that it follows those Truths which

by thinking it discovers, it feels it self become the more perfect; the more that it can resist all Impressions which arise either from the constitution of the Body, or from outward Objects and Accidents. It grows to enjoy a perfecter calm within, and is enabled to go through the fatigues and chances of Life with much more ease and patience. The more it resists the furious cravings of the Body, it enjoys a longer life, and perfecter health. There is also a Chain of Rules which arise out of these two qualities, that in the opinion of all Mankind are the best our Nature is capable of, which are *Veracity* and *Goodness*, which render all the Societies of men both safe and happy: They establish a confidence, and maintain an intercourse in the World; they give credit, and draw esteem; they endear men to one another, and make all the Ties and the whole Neighbourhood and Commerce of Life firm and useful: And there is also a train of thoughts which run through a man's mind and life, which makes him live with great advantage, and die with much firmness; which give him much courage, and attract much esteem: These are all things that a man may safely affirm, since none question them; and as  
no

## *of the Christian Religion.*

no man who sees the constant mirth in which some in *Bedlam* do pass their days, will be from thence tempted to think that they are truly happy ; so the mad frolick in which some Libertines waste both their Bodies and Minds, their Lives and Fortunes, has never imposed so far on the World, as to make men so much as to doubt, whether it were better to be as they are, or to be good and wise, calm and sober.

This then being laid down, it is a great step made in favour of any Religion, if it does exactly quadrat with it all : If the Principles that it contains, and the Rules that it prescribes, are so much of a piece with this, that they do both improve and fortify it. This does not prove it to be true indeed, but it renders it probable ; it makes us inclined to believe, or at least to wish it to be true. The thoughts of a Supream Being, who made and preserves all things, who is every-where, and can do whatsoever he pleases, raise vast Ideas in us, and give a sort of opening and enlargement to our Powers : The sense of his knowing all things, begets a composure, and creates an awe ; the persuasion of his governing the World, gives a quiet, when we know, that as Infinite



## *Concerning the Truth*

Power cannot be withstood, so Sovereign Wisdom cannot be mistaken : Nothing can have such influence, both on our lives, and in our death, as the belief of another World, and of the Account that is to be made after death : Nothing strikes the hatred of Sin, or the obligations to Vertue deeper, than the whole Theory of the Death and Sufferings of Christ. The Rules given in the Gospel to all the Orders of men, and in all the relations of life, would make all Families and Societies both easy and happy ; the obligation to strict justice to all others, and to an abatement of what in justice we might demand from others, by doing as we would be done by : The Rules of not only passing by, and forgiving Injuries, but of loving Enemies, and doing good for evil ; the tenderness as well as the extent of our Charity, the measures and manner of our bounty to the poor, the modesty of deportment, the condescending gentleness, as well as the unaffected humility that are enjoined, have all such Characters in them, so suited to our Faculties, and to Human Society ; to the calm of a man's mind, as well as to the comforts of his life, to fortify him against misfortunes, and to support him against the feebleness  
and

and frailties of his Nature; that he who will suffer himself to weigh all this carefully, must feel a strong disposition to believe a Religion to be true, that agrees with the highest thoughts that we can have of God, and the best Seeds or Principles that we feel within our selves.

All this receives a vast accession from the simplicity of the Worship prescribed by it, which consists chiefly in the exercise of the sublimest thoughts that we can entertain of God, and the justest that we ought to have of our selves; all which are to be expressed in the most genuine and simplest manner possible, with the fewest, but the plainest and most significant Rites. Thus a great advance is made, when a man can be induced to lay all these things together. The whole moral and practical part of Christianity, together with the modesty and reasonableness of its Worship, are great Inducements, if not Arguments, to believe all the rest of it: And this will appear the more sensibly, if one sets by it the Idolatry and Magick, the Cruelties and Brutalities that have defiled the whole *Gentile* World, either as we find them anciently, even among the Politest Nations of *Greece* and *Rome*; and as they continue to this

## Concerning the Truth

day in so great a part of the World, which lies still under the darkness of *Paganism*, according to the Descriptions that Navigators and Travellers have given us.

Here is the first foundation to be laid : To this is to be added, That a Nation which hates our Religion, does yet retain many Books that give a vast strength to it ; and so much the greater, as they (the *Jews* I mean) have preserved those Books with great care. It was a remarkable step, when those Books were put in a Language of greater extent, and more certainly understood, than that in which they were first writ; and that long before our Religion appeared, which was done by the men of that Nation. That Translation was received, and long used by them, which prevented endless Disputes that must have otherwise arisen in the beginnings of Christianity, concerning the true rendring of many Passages in them, which relate to an extraordinary Person, that was to be sent to them, and was looked for by them, under the name of the *Messias* : For the *Hebrew* Language, as it was little known, so it was capable of such different Readings and Interpretations, that if the matter had

had not been settled before by an Authentic and Authorized Translation, it does not well appear how it could have been done. A Christian would not have had credit enough, nor a *Jew* honestly enough to have given a Work of this kind, in which the World would have acquiesced. Now in these Books, as there are some Predictions that seem looser and more general, such as those concerning the *Seed of the Woman*, the *Seed of Abraham*, and the Issue of *David*; so some, chiefly of the later Prophets, fixed upon a period of time, as that he should come during the Second Temple, and within a limited course of years; and that he should be *cut off*, but that afterwards *the City and Sanctuary should be destroyed*: That desolations were determined till the war should be at an end. 9. Dan. 24, 25, 26, 27. Now without entring into the exact adjusting of the time limited of 70 weeks, we do certainly know that their Temple and City were destroyed many Ages ago; and but a few years after, that he, whom we believe to be that *Messias*, had appeared among them, and was *cut off* by them: So that either it must be owned that this was not a true Prophecy, or the *Messias* came before the destruction



struction of *Jerusalem*: This Argument receives a vast strength by those who have made out the point of Chronology of the 70 weeks of years, that is 490 years, which does exactly agree to the interval of time.

This whole matter receives a great confirmation from that Unvaluable History which *Josephus* a *Jewish* Priest, and a man of great Learning and Judgment, well skill'd both in Civil and Military Affairs, and full of zeal both for his Countrey and Religion, has writ in so particular a manner, he having been an Eye-witness, and a considerable Actor in the whole Affair. Whosoever is at the pains to compare that dismal Scene with our Saviour's Predictions, sees such an agreement between them, that this is no small Argument to prove the truth of the whole Religion. Nor is it to be past over without a special remark, that we have this piece of History writ by a *Jew*, who cannot be suspected; had a Christian writ it, he might, perhaps, have been thought too partial to his Religion; or had a *Roman* writ it, he might have been suspected to have aggravated matters for raising the Triumphs of his Countrey; but there lies  
no

no possible colour of suspicion against *Josephus* : And since he mentions the Story both of the Forerunner, and of the Disciple of our Saviour; this is a great presumption, either that the Passage relating to our Saviour himself is genuine, or that if he said nothing of him, it was because he knew he could say nothing that could derogate from his Credit, and that he would say nothing to raise it : For it is plain from those Relations concerning *St. John Baptist* and *St. James*, that he was acquainted with the beginnings of our Religion ; besides, that we see a particular Curiosity possessed him, of being well informed concerning all the different Sects that were among them, and their particular Tenets and Customs.

There are so many Passages in the Gospel, of which the *Jews* must have had such full and Authentical Information, that if they had been falsely related, it must have been in their power to have confuted them beyond the possibility of a contradiction. So that as to this part of the Argument, so much is certain, That the *Jews* looked for their *Messias* during the Second Temple, and about the time that our Saviour appeared, which disposed them so easily  
to

to hearken to every Impostor. Their Temple has been destroyed, their Nation dispersed, their Genealogies lost, by which the certainty of their being *Abraham's* Seed, subsists no more, and their Sacrifices have ceased now above 1600 years. So that their hatred of us, and yet their Books agreeing with ours, when joined together, make no small part of our Argument. But now to come to the strength of our Cause, I lay it thus.

The Gospels were published in the time when many persons were yet alive, who knew, and were appealed to, for the Passages contained in them: Which is made out thus. First, they mention the Temple and Nation of the *Jews* as still in being, which shews they were written before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*: More particularly, *St. Luke* writ the *Acts of the Apostles* two years after *St. Paul's* going to *Rome*, with which he ends that Book: And he begins it with the mention of his Gospel, as writ some time before that. His Gospel also begins with an Account of some other Gospels that had been then writ. Now *St. Paul's* going to *Rome* happened two or three and twenty years after the time of  
of

of our Saviour's Passion and Resurrection, so early were these things put in writing. They were no sooner written, than they were read in the Assemblies of the Christians, as the *Jews* were wont to read the Law and the Prophets in their Synagogues. This we do find from *St. Justin's* Apology, was the practice of *Justin.* his time, which was less than an hun- *Apol. 2.* dred years after they were written. So that we clearly see, these Writings were not kept as Secrets to be divulged as the Depositories of them thought fit, according to the way that the *Romans* had used about the *Sybilline* Oracles; but were immediately copied out for the use of all the Churches, and of as many private Christians as could compass the Copying them. The Epistles of the Apostles do carry in them Characters that lead us very near the time in which they were written: And by comparing those of *St. Paul* with the Books writ by *St. Luke*, we see when most of his Epistles were writ, many of them being before his going to *Rome*: Now these Epistles were addressed to whole Bodies and Churches, and they do often appeal to the Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, as matters which were then well known,



known, and firmly believed by all Christians: From all which I at present infer no more, but that these things were published in the time, and were known in many remote Provinces, soon after they were transacted; and were not kept close to be published in some other Age, when it might have been easy for bold Impostors to make any thing pass with a credulous multitude. Now all this was published near the Fountain, and was so soon spread, that in *Nero's* time we know by *Tacitus*, that there were great numbers of them at *Rome*, who had fallen under a *publick Odium*, and on whom *Nero*, though he had burnt *Rome* himself, threw the hatred of that Conflagration, and punished them with the severity that such a Crime, if truly proved against them, had well deserved. In the Gospels we have the Relations of our Saviour's Miracles, of many of his Transactions with the *Jewish* Nation, so Circumstantiated, most particularly the Account of his Death and Resurrection, is given so minutely, that the *Jews*, who might have been easily Masters of the Books in which these were contained, had it in their power to have overthrown the credit of them, in many Instances,

Instances, if they had found any falshoods in them. If they had not sealed the Sepulchre, or asked of *Pilate* a grant to watch it; if that Guard had not run away in the night, and given out a story of their having fallen asleep, the *Jews* could have well disproved this, upon which the whole depended. Now as the *Jews* were engaged, both out of their hatred of our Saviour and his Doctrine, and to justify themselves from the Imputations of having shed his Blood, and that of his Followers; to have pursued this matter so close, as to have convinced the World of its falshood; so the progress that it made, did alarm them too much to make any one imagine that they could despise it. They had it also in their power, by the Registers which were in their hands; and at least, during *Agrippa's* Reign, they were in so happy and flourishing a condition, that it cannot be said, that the ill state of their Affairs took from them either the heart or the leisure, to look after this. All which received a great confirmation from *St. Paul's* Conversion, who from being one, not only of their Zealots and *Pharisees*, but of the most furious Persecutors of this Religion, was so strangely

ly struck down, and changed, while a company of their own people were about him, that he became afterwards the most successful of all the first Planters of Christianity. He did very frequently appeal to that matter of Fact, in which it had been easy to have taken away his Credit, if they could have denied it. So far then I have gone to shew that this matter was published early, and in the sight of those who were both most concerned, and most able to have detected any deceit that might have been in it; who did not by any Act, of which there remains the least print, among either the Writings of their own Nation, or of the other Enemies to Christianity, attempt to discredit it.

Had not the Genealogies of Christ been taken exactly out of the Temple-Registers, the bare shewing of them had served to have confuted the whole; for if in any one thing, the Registers of their Genealogies were clear and uncontroverted: Since these proved that they were *Abraham's* Seed, and likewise made out their Title to the Lands, which from the days of *Joshua* were to pass down, either to immediate Descendants, or, as they failed, to Collateral Degrees. Now this shews  
plainly,

plainly, that there was a double Office kept of their Pedigrees, one was natural, and might be taken when the Rolls of Circumcision were made up; and the other related to the Division of the Land; in which when the Collateral Line came instead of the Natural, then the last was dropt, as extinct, and the other remained: It being thus plain from their Constitution, that they had these two Orders of Tables, we are not at all concerned in the diversity of the two Evangelists on this head, since both might have Copied them out from those two Offices at the Temple; and if they had not done it faithfully, the *Jews* could have Authentically demonstrated their Error, in entitling our Saviour to that received Character of the *Messias*, that he was to be *the Son of David* by a false Pedigree; therefore since no Exceptions were made in the time, when the sight of the Rolls must have ended the Enquiry, it is plain that they were faithfully Copied out: Nor are we now bound to answer such difficulties as seem to arise out of them, since they were not questioned in the time in which only an Appeal could be made to the Publick Registers themselves. If then it is yielded, that those

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ly struck down, and changed, while a company of their own people were about him, that he became afterwards the most successful of all the first Planters of Christianity. He did very frequently appeal to that matter of Fact, in which it had been easy to have taken away his Credit, if they could have denied it. So far then I have gone to shew that this matter was published early, and in the sight of those who were both most concerned, and most able to have detected any deceit that might have been in it; who did not by any Act, of which there remains the least print, among either the Writings of their own Nation, or of the other Enemies to Christianity, attempt to discredit it.

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publick Actions done in the sight of many Witnesses, passed, without being challenged or disproved in that time, here was a series of most wonderful things, done by a man with a word: He calmed Seas and Winds, he fed great multitudes out of a very small Store, which increased vastly as it was distributed; he cured the most desperate Diseases, such as Palsies and Leprosies: He gave sight to the Blind, strength to the Lame, and hearing to the Deaf; he healed many of their Infirmities; and which was more than all the rest, he raised some that were dead, to life again: One was indeed but newly dead, but another was led out to be buried, and a third had been four days dead: His own Resurrection, Ascension, and the wonderful Effusion of the Holy Ghost, surpassed all, and were the confirming Seals and Testimonies of his whole Doctrine; and proved that he was sent and authorised by God. And besides the Miracles which were wrought by those whom he sent to preach his Doctrine, the Gift of Tongues that they had, as it was absolutely necessary for the discharge of their Commission, of going to teach all Nations; so it was of a nature not to be capable  
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of an Imposture ; since it was in the power of every single man to have discovered the truth or falshood of it. In other Miracles it may be suggested, that Witnesses might be so managed, as to carry on the credit of them, true or false : But the Apostles having given this out as a part, and a main part of their History, we cannot suppose but that this was true, otherwise the falshood of it must have been discovered, and with it the whole must have sunk.

If these extraordinary things were really transacted as they are related, it cannot be pretended that they were the effects of some Secrets in Nature, which our Saviour might know : For though the Loadstone may be plaid with so much variety, as to amuse a simple man ; and though Jugglers by a slight of hand seem to do wonders ; yet the vast variety, as well as the great usefulness of our Saviour's Miracles, shews he was not limited to a few Secrets, which work always one way : Nor were the Wonders he did shews of pomp, that do only amuse ; but they were things of such use to Mankind ; that it very well became one who was sent of God to

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prove



*Concerning the Truth*

prove his Mission by them : Nor can it be said that Imagination wrought powerfully, and made people fancy they saw things that they saw not; or that the persuasion which some took up, might so strike their Fancy, as really to cure their Diseases; for though a Hypochondriacal person may be deceived, especially in the dark or twilight, yet numbers of people in full daylight could not agree in the same Mistakes : Some Effects were too signal to be so mistaken; such, as for a man born blind, to be made to see by a word; or for a Storm to be calmed with a rebuke : And tho in critical Diseases, such as Fevers, which lie in the fermentations of the Blood, a strong Conceit may have a real operation; yet Chronical Distempers, and Natural Defects go not off by Fancy. Nor can it be thought that these wonderful Operations could come from the assistance of an Evil Spirit; for since our Saviour's Doctrine tended wholly to pull down the Kingdom of *Satan*, to destroy Idolatry and Magick, and to root out all Immorality, an Evil Spirit could not co-operate to carry on so good a Design; otherwise it had changed its nature, and from being bad, must have  
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grown good; so that our Saviour's Answer to this Objection was full and clear; that *if Satan was divided against himself, his kingdom could not stand*: For our Saviour's Doctrine being so totally opposite to him, if he had joined his force to give it credit, he must thereby have pulled down his own Kingdom.

“ But to give Infidelity its utmost advantage, we shall now consider that which is its last refuge, and chief strength; which is, That in all Ages some men have been so bold and crafty, while the Herd has been so simple and credulous, that many Impostures have past upon the World in such different shapes, that though we cannot discover the conduct of them, yet we are not for that to judge in favour of them; and therefore though it is not easy to assign the method how Christianity came to be received, we may still have reason to mistrust the whole matter. This might be tolerably alledged, if there were any one thing in our Religion that gave the least shadow to suspicion: If the Teachers of it had pretended either to Authority, Wealth, or Pleasure; if, on the contrary,

the Rules that were laid down in it, did not shut out all these: For whatsoever corrupt men may have brought in since by an after-game, that has no relation to the beginnings and Doctrines of our Religion, which does directly contradict them. So far were the first Publishers of this from expecting advantages by it, that they knew they were to be exposed to much contempt and hatred, and that by their own Countreymen, in which there is a peculiar sting: They looked for severe Persecutions, nor were they disappointed; they endured great hardships, by Want and Poverty, by Imprisonments, and Cruel Whippings, and in conclusion, they lost their Lives in the Cause: And they did so certainly reckon for all this, that they warned their first Converts of a *fiery trial* that was to come upon them, and of *much tribulation through which they must enter to the kingdom of heaven*. Impostors must draw on their Followers by specious Promises, and flattering Hopes; and it argues a great certainty of success, as well as an assurance of the truth of a Cause, when those who promote it, are so far from drawing on men by Allurements, till they are once engaged, that they

1 Pet. 4. 12.

14. Acts

32.

they warn them early of the dangers and difficulties that are before them: With this our Saviour begun, when he said, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and become my disciple.* <sup>16. Matth. 24, 25.</sup> The severe Morals which accompany this Doctrine, and are indeed a main part of it, are a very lively character of Integrity: The true Secret of all Corrupt Religions is, That they propose somewhat to be done for the honour of the Deity, by which their Votaries may compensate with God, and may buy off their Obligations to solid and true Vertue: But a Religion that proposes a simple and naked Worship, with such easy performances in it, that no man can suppose, the bare doing of them is any way meritorious; and that proposes these, not as compensations, but as helps to real Holiness, and that carries the obligation to it, into the secret recesses of the heart, to our very thoughts, words and looks, has nothing of the air or genius of Imposture in it.

A Religion that flatters no part of Mankind, no not those who are in possession of the greatest esteem, has a further Character of truth in it. The Jews



valued themselves upon their being *Abraham's* Posterity, and their having a *Law* of many *Precepts* given them by God; among them the most popular were the *Pharisees*, who valued themselves chiefly upon many voluntary Observances, as *fences and outworks to the Law*, which kept them out of danger of disobeying. Now a great part of the Doctrine of our Saviour, and his Apostles, was designed to beat them out of these, to discover the Hypocrisy of the *Pharisees*; to shew them that all the *Gentile Nations* were now to be set on the same level with them, and that thenceforth the obligation and vertue of all their Legal Performances was at an end. The Apostles shewed as little inclination to gratify or flatter the most admired part of *Heathenism*, I mean the *Philosophers*, who delighted in lofty Eloquence, refined Subtilty, and sublime Metaphisicks: But nothing of all this appearing among them, they were despised by the *Philosophers*, who esteemed all Inspiration, Madness; and were prepossessed against both Miracles and Prophecies, as no better than Juggleries. There was nothing left to gain, but the Rabble and Herd, and yet these were not flattered neither.

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They are always struck with Pomp and Magnificence, they love Sights and Shows, and a splendid Exterior in Religion, to which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* had been so much accustomed, that besides the difficulty of making them forsake the Religion of their Fathers, in which they had been educated, which is always a thing of an ill sound, and of a bad appearance; they were to draw them from Pageantry to Simplicity; and from outward and costly Shews, to a naked, plain way of strictness and purity. In all these things it must be confessed, that there is nothing of the methods of Imposture: Now to suspect that any Artifice lies hid, when all appearances contradict it, is a very unreasonable piece of jealousy; and looks as if men were resolved to suspect, only for Suspicion's sake. When therefore there is positive proof brought on the one side, of Miracles publickly done, attested by great numbers of Witnesses, published in the same Age, while great multitudes were yet alive, who were appealed to, and who did so confirm these Books, that they were read in all the Assemblies of the Saints or Christians, as the Text and Rule of their Belief, as well as of their Man-

Manners; when, I say, all this is proved, and when there appears nothing, neither in the Doctrine it self, nor in the management of the Apostles, and their first Converts, to furnish us with any colour of apprehending any foul dealing, it is an unreasonable thing, still to stand upon the general Argument, of the possibility of an Imposture.

But though it be not necessary, and indeed in many cases not possible, to prove a Negative, yet this Argument is so full of evidence, that even that may be undertaken here. There are four things possible that may be alledged as methods to support the possibility of a deceit, put on the World in this matter.

The 1<sup>st</sup> is, That the Apostles intended a Deceit, which they contrived and managed successfully.

The 2<sup>d</sup> is, That they themselves were deceived, and were made Tools to abuse others.

The 3<sup>d</sup> is, That the whole matter went about in Tales and Stories, till by every one's magnifying them, they grew to be believed without strict enquiry, and due proof made.

And

And the 4<sup>th</sup> is, That the Books which contain this Doctrine were at first more sparingly writ, but were afterwards interpolated, many Passages being put in them that had not been in them at first. I have never met with, nor can I imagine any other Hypothesis for Infidelity to found upon; and I am not afraid to name all these, because I am very certain I can demonstrate the absolute Incredibility of every one of them.

As to the first, Of the Apostles having contrived and managed this, on design to abuse the World. We see nothing in them that looks like this; a plain Simplicity and unaffected Honesty appears in all their Discourses and Actions; They were not bred to Literature, Eloquence, or Policy; some one or all of which are necessary for men who venture upon such Undertakings: And therefore Persons utterly unfurnished in them are little to be suspected. But if men be without all these helps, at least they must be naturally subtile and dextrous, bold and daring: Since Nature, when well moulded, may be capable of great matters, without the refinings of  
Art.



Art. Now the Apostles, as they were all, except *St. Paul*, of *Galilee*, which bred the most contemptible men of all *Judea*; so they were Fishermen by their Trade, which of all the Employments that we know, does naturally flat the Spirits the most: They are in the Water much, in the night for most part, and in open boats, which exposes them to such Cold and Phlegmatick Air, that this must needs dull their Spirits exceedingly. But let us suppose them to be as capable, either of the wickedness of contriving, or of the skill in managing such a Fraud, as profane men can fancy them to be. I go next to shew that the Supposition is absurd. The Resurrection of Christ was the main point upon which all the rest turned. I am now to suppose what shall afterwards be proved, That this matter went abroad at first in the same manner in which we do now read it in the Gospel; and so in this place I am only to shew that the Relation which we now have, could not be the contrivance of the Apostles. Our Saviour was laid in a *new Tomb*, not an Ancient Sepulchre, to which there might have been secret *Avenues*, that had been  
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so long forgot, that they were known only to some few persons. This was both newly made, and hewen out of a *Rock* : So it might have been well examined, and a passage could not be wrought into it in a night or two. This happened likewise in the beginning of the *Paschal* Solemnity, when it was *full Moon*, which in so pure an Air gives a very bright light. At that time *Jerusalem* was so full of people, all the *Jews* coming up to keep the *Feast*, that it being then their Summer, since we see *handfulls of Corn* were to be offered up at that time, as the *First-fruits* of the Years growth ; we have reason to believe, that great numbers, who could not be conveniently lodged in *Jerusalem*, were in so pleasant a time, and at so great a Rendezvous, walking in the Fields in the night-time. These things cannot be denied : The Apostles had also seen that one of their number, of whom they had suspected no such thing before, had betrayed our Saviour ; that the fear with which they themselves were struck upon his apprehension, had made them all run away, and forsake him ; and in particular, that he who had been on other occasions the forwardest

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wardest of them all, and who had been warned by our Saviour of his danger, and so was, by consequence, on his guard, and less likely to fall, had yet upon a remote apprehension of danger, with repeated Oaths denied that he knew him. Now he who through fear will deny a truth, is much more like, upon the same, or a greater danger, to discover a falshood. This being the state of that matter, let us now see how we can possibly imagine the Apostles, who knew what effects fear had so lately upon themselves, and who had also seen to what a degree one of them might be corrupted, could so far trust either themselves or one another in such a matter, in which they had reason to believe, that the *Jews*, who had gone so far with their Master, would spare neither arts nor violence to fetch out the Secret: Besides, that to venture on an Imposture, which goes so much against Human Nature, and which naturally strikes men with fears and jealousies, men must be long practised to boldness, and must have made such essays upon themselves, and upon one another, as to think they are secure of all that are in the Confidence. But let us  
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pass over all this, and then see how the matter, when resolved on, could have been managed: Either they were to steal away the Body of Christ, or to leave it in the Sepulchre. If they had left it, all must have broke out immediately; the bare exposing the Body must have confuted all that they could have said; so it must be supposed that they carried it away: Now how this could be done when a Watch was set, when the Moon shone bright, and such numbers of men were wandring about in every corner, is not easy to be imagined. Some persons to a considerable number must be imployed, if it had been to be carried to any distance, and they could not think themselves safe if it had been laid near the place of the Sepulchre: Some trace or print must have remained, if they had broke ground; which they must have expected would have been looked for; and being found out, would have discovered all; not to mention the natural horror that all men have, at the handling *dead Bodies*, even in what is necessary for their *burial*, but most of all *Jews*, who by their Law became *defiled* to a high degree by it. But suppose the dead Body  
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so disposed of, that they apprehended to hear no more news of it, how is it to be imagined, that those frequent Apparitions of our Saviour's, particularly that in *Galilee*, to Five hundred at once, which is appealed to, while many of them were yet alive, could have been managed. Here then, we have first twelve Witnesses, against whom no just exception lies, even to feed Suspicion, who affirm a matter of fact, and call in many others as their Vouchers to support their Testimony: They stand to it to the last, tho they suffered much for it, and could not possibly gain any thing by it; and yet are supposed by Infidels to contrive and stick to a Forgery, merely to persuade the World to Vertue and Purity, and to Sincerity and Truth; which they begin with a train of falshood and deceit, without any other visible Bait but their love to their dead *Master*; that they might magnify him, and give him a lasting name, and wipe off the reproach of his infamous Death, by this bold Contrivance of theirs. A man that can suppose all this to be possible, will suppose any thing; and shews that he has no regards, so much as to the colours of Truth, but will advance any thing,

thing, rather than be beaten out of his Infidelity.

But to follow this matter more home; a part, and a great one, of the History of the Gospel, is, That ten days after our Saviour ascended up into Heaven, in the sight of his Apostles, which with Infidels will pass for a part of the contrivance, they received such extraordinary Illapses and Powers from Heaven, in consequence to the *Promises* that our Saviour had made them, that they were enabled to work Miracles, and to *speak with divers Tongues*: and the first essay of this appeared at the next Festival of the *Jews*, in which *Jerusalem* was again filled, not only with all the *Jews* of *Judea*, but also with those of the dispersion, who from all Quarters were come up at Pentecost from the East, as far as from *Persia* and *Media*, from the West, as far as from *Rome* and *Libia*, from the South, as far as from *Arabia*, and from the North, as far as from *Parthia*, and many Provinces of *Asia the Less*, and from several Islands, as well as from the Continent. Here was an astonishing thing, to see unlettered men, all of the sudden break out in speaking of Languages, in which they had no sort of Education or Practice:

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Fevers or Enthusiastical Heats may inflame men so far, as to make them speak those Languages which they understand, tho' they are not otherwise ready at them; for the Prints being already in their Brains, a strong exaltation of their Spirits, may fetch those out much better than they themselves in a cooler and more sedate state could have done; but where there are no previous Impressions, no heat whatsoever can fetch out that which is not within: Now as this was the most necessary of all other things to qualifie men to execute their Commission, of going to *teach all Nations*, in which they must have made a very slow progress, if they must have learned the Language of every Countrey to which they were to go; so it was the most signal of all others, and as was formerly hinted at, was that which must have been presently discover'd if it had not been notoriously and unquestionably true. With these Powers, and those Languages, the Apostles went every where; and promised to confer the like gifts on those that should receive and believe their Gospel: And in the Epistles which they writ afterwards to those Churches, even when their Authority

Rom. 15.  
 19.  
 1 Cor. 14.  
 2 Cor. 12.  
 12.  
 3 Gal. 5.  
 1 Thes.  
 1. 5.  
 1 Tim.  
 1. 20.  
 Heb. 2. 4.

was

was called in question, they appealed to the gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred by their means; so that either these things were notoriously true, or they must have been despised as the most assuming and impudent of all Impostors: These were their Credentials that procured them a hearing; and as men were *disposed to eternal Life*, so they received and entertained their Message. Thus we have seen by a great variety of Considerations which this matter presents to us, that not only there is no colour of Reason, to incline a man to think that the Apostles designed to impose upon the World, but that there is all possible Reason to the contrary, to persuade us, that they were in no respect capable of projecting any such thing, nor of effecting it if they had intended it.

The 2<sup>d</sup>. Supposition of Infidelity is, That they themselves might have been deceived by two or three designing persons, who might have imposed upon them: that in the twilight a troubled fancy might be made imagine, that they saw Christ, which being affirmed by those who were on the secret, the rest might so far comply with those who



said they saw him, as either to imagine it, or at least to yield to the rest, so as to say, that they saw him; for so conceits do sometimes spread, and whole crouds fancy they see or hear things, being faced down by the boldness of a few impudent persons; and this being once set about, the same Artifices might prevail again and again, upon the same weaknesses. This might look tolerable, if there were no more to be said for the Resurrection of Christ than one or two transient views; but continued discourses, the reaching his Hands and Side to be felt to; Christ's Appearance to numbers in full day-light, with all the Series of what passed between him and his Disciples; and finally, his blessing them, and being parted from them, and ascending up to Heaven; but above all, the wonderful Pentecost that followed it, the strange Effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the extraordinary Gifts that were then given, were things in which it was not possible for men to be deceived. So that the Apostles did either certainly know that all those things which they attested were true, or that they were false; there can be no mean in the matter; and indeed this objection is so slight, that

that it scarce deserved to be considered.

The 3<sup>d</sup>. pretence is more specious; That the History of the Gospel passed easily upon the World, without due Examination, that it appears both by some hints that are in the *New Testament*, and several passages in *Josephus*, that the *Jews* were at that time very credulous, and were apt to follow every Pretender: they were broken into several Sects, and under great Distractions and Oppressions, which prepare men to hearken after Novelties: so that great numbers might run in upon Rumours, and they being once engaged, they might reckon, that in honour they could not go off, and would stick to it even to the hazard of their Lives. So we see some Enthusiasts and Sectaries in all Ages, have courted Martyrdom, and endured great Misery with a triumphant Firmness. But to answer all this, a great difference is to be made between points of Speculation, and matters of Fact; in the former, men drink in persuasions, and then they grow to be so full of them, especially when a conceit of their own understanding is twisted with them, so that they think it an Affront to their own Reason, at least a detracting from its reputation, to confess so publicly

that they were mistaken ; but in matters of Fact the thing is quite otherwise, these are to be strictly enquired into, and a man's believing them, imports no more, but that he had a good Opinion of those that informed him, nor is it any reproach to be too easy in this ; it rather argues a man to be candid and good in himself, which makes him too apt to think well of others, and to believe them : and how firm soever men may be to Opinions, when they have once approved them themselves, so that Self Love works secretly, yet they are still ready to re-examine matters of Fact, when their first Informations are called in question ; especially if they are like to suffer considerably for owning and espousing them. It is very true, that the *Jews* had so general an expectation of a Messias about this time, that they were apt to run after every Pretender, yet they were as apt to forsake him, when their hopes failed them. But all their expectations run in so different a Channel, from what they saw in our Saviour, that how much soever their Curiosity might have prompted them once to run to him, their prejudices drew them so strongly from him, that nothing but

but mighty and unanswerable Evidence could make them still adhere to him. They had groaned long under the Slavery of a bloody Tyrant, they hated *Herod* and his Family, they could not bear the *Roman Yoke*, that was coming over them. They fancied a *Messias* should come, in whom the Characters of a *Moses* and a *David* should meet, that he should raise the Honour of their Nation, and establish the Observances of their *Laws*. There were three things in our Saviour and his Doctrine, any one of which was sufficient to disgust them. 1<sup>st</sup>. His mean and humble Appearance; whereas they looked for a glorious Conquerour and a magnificent Prince. When he made nothing of paying tribute to *Cæsar*, and despised the offers of a Crown, they could not but despise him for it, according to their Notions. 2<sup>dy</sup>. His seeming to set a low value on the Observances of the Law, and his Disciples setting the *Gentiles* at liberty from them, was of all things that which appeared to them the most odious and impious; they were so accustomed to a Reverence for those Rites, that no sort of Immorality could strike them, so much as a coldness in them, and there-



fore they could not bear some Liberties which our Saviour or his Disciples took on the Sabbath day, even tho' those could have well been reconciled to the Letter of the Law; and 3<sup>ly</sup>. besides the common fondness that all men have for their Countrey, they had so particular a value for their own, for *Abraham's circumcised Posterity*, and such a contempt for all the Heathen Nations, who were no better than *Dogs* in their esteem; that the many broad hints that appeared in our Saviour's Parables and Discourses in favour of the *Gentiles*, and the open declaration which the Apostles soon after made, of bringing them into an equality of Dignity and Priviledges with themselves, was such a stone of stumbling to every natural *Jew*, that nothing besides a full and uncontested Evidence could have ballanced it: therefore tho' it may be confessed that the Circumstances the *Jews* were in, made them easy to be practised upon, and to run as often as any said, *see here is the Messiah*, or *there he is*; yet their Prejudices and false Notions were so rooted in them, that as a great many of them left our Saviour, and fell off from his Apostles, when they understood the Tendencies

Tendencies of his Doctrine; so those that stuck to him, were without doubt so far shaken by those prejudices, that they made them examine all things the more critically, and particularly look into those wonderful matters of Fact that were believed among them; so that how easy soever their first Credulity might have been, they must have reconsider'd the matter more narrowly before they could overcome Principles and Notions that were so deeply rooted in them. Men are not easily carried to forsake their Friends and Families, to draw upon them the Hatred and Curses of their Countreymen. These things have a Charm and Authority in them, which few can withstand; but when it rested not there, but went on to all sorts of Outrages, to the spoiling their Goods, the imprisoning their Persons, to cruel Whippings, to the beheading some, and the stoning others, when this Fury grew so general, that even *devout and honourable Women* in contradiction to the Gentleness and Decencies of their Sex, went in to it; then at least it is reasonable to suppose, that they made all possible enquiries into the matters of Fact. I do acknowledge that the  
Martyrdoms

Martyrdoms in the succeeding Ages, are no concluding-proof in the behalf of our Religion; but in the first Age, in which the question was, Whether such things were seen, and heard or not; mens suffering so much for their persuasions, shews this at least, that they were so persuaded. Therefore when this was the point, Whether they had seen or heard such or such things? their adhering firmly to it, shewed that they did so believe.

The case was yet more amazing with relation to the *Gentiles*, who were generally given up to a sensual as well as to a sensible Religion, that was overrun with Idolatry and Magick; who were not acquainted with the Prophecies that were among the *Jews*, and despised them as a mean and a factious Nation, that had an ill-natur'd Religion; so that they had not that disposition among them, which awaken'd the Curiosity of the *Jews*. They had been so accustomed to gross and lewd Fables concerning their gods, that it was the moulding them anew, to talk of One Invisible Deity, and of a Spiritual Worship, or a severe Morality, especially in some Particulars, such as the restraint of Appetite,

petite, or the loving an Enemy. Add to all this, that the Heathen Priests were soon aware, that this Doctrine would have very ill effects upon their Profits and Authority; therefore they animated the World into a most implacable Hatred of them, which broke out soon into most violent Persecutions: and as the Governors of the Provinces and subaltern Magistrates were willing enough to gratify the People in their Fury, so the Emperors themselves were soon set on against them. The restless Tempers of the *Jews* at that time had so provoked them, that it was crime enough for the Christians to be consider'd as a Sect of the *Jews*; and so careless were they in *Rome*, of enquiring exactly into those Matters, that we find by *Suetonius*, that they believed that Christ had set on the *Jews* to all their Seditions, by which they must have been enflamed so much the more against the Christians; and if such a Monster as *Nero* was rightly informed of the exactness of their Morals, that must have sharpened him so much the more against them. There was in his time a vast multitude of them at *Rome*, the matter of fact concerning Christ's being

*Sueton in  
Claudio.*

*Tacit an-  
nal. 15.*



being put to Death in *Tiberius's* Reign by *Pontius Pilate*, Procurator at *Judea*, was so well known, that it was put in the Annals of that time; and the Christians appeal'd to the Publick Registers for many other Particulars relating to it. No wonder if the Singularity of their Doctrine, and the Strictness of their Lives, draw a general Hatred upon them; *Nero* laid hold on this, and he having once fastned the burning of *Rome* upon them, was obliged to follow that with a severity proportion'd to the heaviness of the Imputation. Upon all these Accounts we see how little the *Gentiles* were disposed to hearken to our Saviour's Doctrine, or to the Testimony of his Apostles; and as for the few Philosophers that were among them, as they were more likely to look into the Proofs that were offer'd, or the Evidence that was given, with an inquisitive Strictness, so they were as strongly prejudic'd against it, as either their Pride or their Principles could make them; they were haughty and scornful men, they despised the vulgar as a contemptible Herd, and undervalued all that were not formed into their Notions, and accustomed to their Cant. They had such a high Opinion  
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of their own Understandings and their Theories, that they were possessed against Inspiration, Miracles and Prophecy; they could not digest Mysteries, nor hear any thing that seem'd to rise above a Man's Understanding: nor could they endure a Doctrine that took in all sorts of people within it; reckoning, that only men of a peculiar frame of Mind, and of a singular Education, were capable of true Philosophy; and they were men that studied both to be popular and safe: so that howsoever *Socrates* had exposed himself to the fury of the *Athenians*, by contradicting the received Opinions concerning the Divinity; yet all the later Pretenders had avoided his fate, by complying with receiv'd Opinions and Practises. So that upon all these accounts we see, that all sorts of people were at the beginnings of Christianity so strongly prejudic'd against many things in it, that nothing but a very extraordinary Evidence could have overcome it; nothing less than the *demonstration of the Spirit*, that is of the Inspiration that did actuate them, which was given with power in mighty Signs and Wonders, could have overcome it. It was to this that they always appeal-  
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1 Cor. 2.4

ed, and this only could conquer such mighty Prejudices. When the love of this world, together with the fears of suffering, made many fall back, chiefly to Judaism, we do not find that they furnish'd the Enemies of this Religion with any thing to object to it, or detract from it; tho' Apostates, who to justify their own change, and to beat off the Reproaches of those whom they forsake, are observ'd, to have a peculiar sharpness against those of whose Sect they once were. They may be apt to forge unjust Slanders and Calumnies, but are not like to suppress any scandalous Truth that they can suggest against them: and yet we find no Prints of any such things alledged by any of them; If there had been either Delusion, Imposture or Magick in those great Performances, those Apostates could have discover'd all such Secrets; some having fallen away that had been *partakers of the Holy* 6 Heb. 4. 5. *Ghost, and of the Powers of the world to come*; that is of the Dispensation of the Messias. We see by *Pliny's* Epistle how early Christianity had spread it self over the Northern parts of *Asia the Lesser*, filling not only their Towns and Cities, but even their Villages and Hamlets, to such a degree,

*Plin. Lib.*

10. Ep. 97.

degree, that the Temples of the gods were forsaken; and no more Sacrifices were offer'd at their Altars: He adds, that many had of their own accord return'd back from that Religion, before he had begun to prosecute them; some three years before, others more, and one five and twenty years before that time: Which is a good Character, to shew us how early Christianity had been spread in those parts; he adds, that an Incredible Multitude was informed against, and that his severity had brought back a great many; by these he might have been well informed concerning them. He adds, that since he saw such numbers in danger of falling under the severity of the Imperial Edicts, he had tortured two of their *Deaconesses*, that he might draw from them all the secrets that were amongst them: but he found nothing, only an inflexible aversion to the Worship of the gods, and the Genius of the Emperor: and that they met and Sung Hymns to Christ as a God, and were tied by Vows not to commit Adultery, nor to Steal, or deceive, or commit other Crimes; and that their Feasts were Innocent and harmless. This happening not above Seventy years after our Saviour's



viour's death, shews us how fast this Doctrine did spread, and what vast numbers had then embraced it; and yet these being all born and bred with such prejudices against it, cannot be supposed to have received it too rashly, or to have believed it implicitly.

The last supposition of Infidelity, yet remains to be consider'd, which is, 'That something must be yielded to have been published and received concerning this Religion, soon after its first appearance; but that in process of time the Books might have been Interpolated, after all the Eye-witnesses were dead, and many Additions of great Importance might have been clapt in afterwards. And this indeed is the plausiblest part of their whole Plea; for if they yield that the Books which we now have, were given out in the same manner as we have them, and that they were receiv'd in the Age in which many Eye-witnesses were alive to vouch them, then all that can be cavilled at, after this is once yielded, is so poor and slight, that it only shews the incurable obstinacy of those who maintain it. This last has more colour: there were many Gospels given out at first, as St. *Luke* informs us, some false Gospels

Gospels there were ; and there was a considerable diversity among some Copies ; parcels were in some, that were left out in others : and it could scarce be otherwise, while many were Writing what they themselves knew and saw, and others might Copy these too hastily, and uncorrectly : Yet within a hundred years after our Saviour's Death, we find this matter was so settled, that we see these Books were cited by *Justin*, and *Irenæus*, not to mention the Epistles of *Clemens*, *Ignatius* and *Policarp* ; and from them downward, in a continued succession of Writers, and they were such as we now have them. I except only such small variations, as might be the mistakes and errors of Copiers ; all which when put together, amount to nothing that is of any Importance to the matters of our belief, or the Rule of our Life. Now, when we consider how near *S. John* lived to that time, and that *Irenæus* was instructed by *Policarp*, who was ordained by *St. John*, and lived not far from him, when we see what weight *Irenæus* lays on the *Scriptures*, in opposition to all *Oral Tradition*, and how positively he makes his appeals to them ; when we see how soon after that time, both the *Greek* and

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*Latin*, the *Roman* and *African* Churches, those of *Syria*, and *Ægypt*, do all agree to cite the same Books, in the same words, or with inconsiderable variations, we have all reason to conclude, that this great point of the Books was settled much sooner: since by the end of a hundred years they were in all Peoples hands, and were read in all the Assemblies of Christians; they were also read by their Enemies, *Trypho* in particular, as *Justin* informs us: we see also soon after this, that *Celsus* had read them; and indeed, it is plain from all the Christian Writers in those Ages, that the Books of the N. Testament were in all mens hands; they quote them so often in their Apologies, and other Books, as Writings that were generally read and known: such a spreading of Books, and multiplying of Copies, was a work of time when all was to be writ out; and this was so near the Fountain, that we have all reason to believe that the Originals at least of *St. Paul's* Epistles to the Churches, were still preserved: and tho an Oral Tradition of a Doctrine, even for so short a period, is so doubtful a conveyance, that it were not easy to think, that it might not have enlarged

ged a little beyond the truth; yet a Tradition of some Books could hardly in so very short a time have been varied, or altered, chiefly in so important a point, as the Resurrection of Christ: which was the main Article of their belief, and that which runs as a Thread through all the Sermons and Epistles of the Apostles: and indeed, this being once yielded, settles all the rest with it. Therefore since we have such a Copious concurrence of Authors that cite those Books all-a-long, from that time downwards, besides the Epistles of those Apostolical Men, *S. Clement*, *S. Ignatius*, and *S. Policarp*, the first having writ in that very time, probably before the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the other two soon after it; in which several of the Books of the N. Testament are cited, as Writings then well known, and in all mens hands: we must from all this firmly conclude, that the Books, as we now have them, are not altered from the form in which they were at first writ.

They were quickly Copied out for the use of the Churches: they were read at the Assemblies of the Christians; they were Translated into the vulgar



Tongues, particularly the *Latin* and *Syriack*, very early ; so that they becoming so soon publick, and getting into so many hands, it was not possible for any one, who might have had the wickedness to have attempted the corrupting them, to have compassed it afterwards. And what noise soever the Enemies of our Faith may make of the various readings, and how much soever the bulk of them, as they are added to the *Polyglot* Bible, may at first view strike the eye ; yet when all these are examined, they amount not to any one variation in any Article of our Faith, and they appear so plainly to be the slips of the Writers, that this can never shake any man who will be at the pains to search it to the bottom. So that I have now gone round all the suppositions of Infidelity ; and have, I hope, clearly evinced, that there is not any one of them which is in any sort credible or even possible.

I will in conclusion consider some few of their Objections, indeed all that I have ever met with, which seem to have any force ; ‘Some cannot imagine ‘why our Saviour, after his Resurrection, shewed himself only to a few, and ‘did

‘ did not come in next day to the Temple,  
‘ and shew himself to that vast Assembly,  
‘ which was then to be there; since that  
‘ must for ever have put an end to all  
‘ doubting, and have silenced all his  
‘ Enemies. This were a very reasonable  
Objection, if *Gods ways were as our ways*:  
our warm tempers that boil with resentment,  
and that pursue eagerly our own  
Vindication, would have no doubt  
wrought this way; but if we go to  
ask an account of all God’s works or  
ways, we shall find them very different  
from our own Notions. A great part  
of his Creation seems useless to us:  
much of it seems defective, as well as  
another part seems superfluously redundant  
to us: there are many very unaccountable  
things, both in the structure  
of our bodies, and the temper of our  
minds; and if we will quarrel with every  
thing that does not suit our own Notions,  
we will be very uneasy in our thoughts.  
There are some sins, for which  
God gives over all further dealing with  
persons and Nations, and upon which  
he delivers them up to their own Reprobate  
minds: and when he has used such  
sufficient means, as might well serve to  
convince and reform them, he lets them

alone, and leaves them to their own hearts lusts: Those who had seen so many of our Saviour's Miracles, which instead of having a good effect on them, did only serve to harden them the more in their opposition to him, did well deserve that God should suffer them to harden themselves still more and more: and it was enough that Christ shewed himself so often to such a competent number of unexceptionable Witnesses, and give them full powers to prove their Testimony concerning him, by working such Miracles as he himself had wrought. Why he did it in this way, and in no other, is among the secrets of his Councils, which are to us unsearchable. When our Souls become more perfect, our Capacities and Faculties more enlarged, and our thoughts more exalted, then we may come to understand the reason of these things more perfectly than it is possible for us to do in this depressed and darkened state. One thing after all we may gather from our Saviour's words, who has pronounced them *blessed who have not seen; and yet have believed*; and from the value that in many places of the N. Testament is set on *faith* and on *believing*, that God did not intend

intend to give the world such an undeniable Evidence, as that it should be out of their power to dis-believe : for to believe either such things as our senses do plainly perceive, or to believe Mathematical Truths, is that to which our Nature constrains us, and for which we can deserve no sort of commendation. Therefore to make our Faith to be both well grounded, and also highly acceptable to God, it is enough that there are sufficient Reasons offered to us, to persuade our belief, and that there is no good reason to the contrary, tho' we may start possibilities of imaginary reasons against it; and a man who is so far convinced by those, that he is from thence determin'd to believe all the other parts of that Revelation, both the Promises and the Precepts of it; so that he gives himself up to its conduct in the whole course of his Life, in the assured expectation of the Promises it sets before him; has such a Faith, that must certainly be of great value in the sight of God; because it has a great effect on the believer himself. There is beauty enough in the Rules of our Religion, to oblige every man to examine well the Authority upon which it rests, and to him



## Concerning the Truth

that will set his thoughts a working upon it, this Authority will soon appear strong enough to determine his assent: and when that has its due operation upon him, then his Faith has had its full effect. So that it is no dull, nor lazy or implicate Faith on which the *New Testament* sets so high a value; it is a *Faith* that *purifies the heart*, that *worketh by love*, that makes us *new Creatures*, and engages us to *keep the Commandments of God*: so that this objection has no other force in it but this, that God's ways are a great depth, and to us are past finding out.

' A second Objection is, That if our  
' Saviour and his Apostles gave such  
' Proofs of their Mission, how is it to  
' be imagined, that any man could be  
' so obstinate, as to stand it out against  
' so full a Conviction? These things  
' were probably enquired into at that  
' time, by men of all sides; Curiosity  
' might work on some, and Fear on others:  
' and those who had drawn the Guilt of  
' his Blood upon them, were most particu-  
' larly concern'd to examine the matter  
' carefully. Since Blood is apt to raise a  
' Clamour within, which is not easily  
' silenced: besides, according to the *Acts*  
' of

' of the Apostles, the Jews, and even  
 ' their Sanhedrin, seem to have been  
 ' struck with the Reports of his Resur-  
 ' rection, so that they knew not how  
 ' to gainsay it, and were concerned only  
 ' to stifle and silence it. Now it seems  
 ' somewhat unaccountable how it came  
 ' that they still stood out, and were  
 ' not overcome with all that Evidence,  
 ' if it was so full as we do now repre-  
 ' sent it? But in answer to this, it is  
 to be considered, that there is a per-  
 verseness and depravedness in humane  
 nature that cannot be accounted for.  
 To some of the Enemies of our Religi-  
 on, I mean the Jews, this can be no  
 objection, since Pharaoh's hardning him-  
 self against all Moses's Miracles and Mes-  
 sages, and even the murmurings of their  
 Forefathers the Israelites, in the Wil-  
 derness, are every whit as extraordinary  
 Instances of the depravation of humane  
 nature, as these we now consider were :  
 but indeed we need not go so far to  
 seek for amazing Characters and Instances  
 of the madness of mankind : no Laws, no  
 Rewards, no Punishments, no Experience  
 nor Observation can make men wise or  
 good. When men are once engaged in  
 ill courses, they quickly contract habits,  
 and

and are soon hardned in them; and when Pride and Interest are got on the side of that, which of it self was strong enough to overcome them, then they become intractable and fierce against every opposition, and become really the worse, the more they are pursued and dealt with.

‘ Another objection is, Why do not  
 ‘ some of those Miracles that seem to have  
 ‘ been with a sort of profusion thrown out  
 ‘ abundantly at first, now appear to con-  
 ‘ vincethe World? for these would certain-  
 ‘ ly have a great effect? What was said to  
 the first objection, belongs in a great  
 measure to this. We are not to ask  
 of God an account of his ways, if he has  
 laid enough before us for our conviction;  
 and if that is rejected by us, we have  
 no reason to expect that he should dis-  
 turb the order that he has settled in  
 the Creation, to gratify our humours. It  
 were not suitable to that order that he  
 has so wisely and usefully establish’d,  
 that it should be too often put out of  
 its channel: It is enough that at the  
 first openings of the Two Revealed Reli-  
 gions that he deliverd to the world,  
 he gave evident Signs, both of his Do-  
 minion over the Works of his hands,  
 and

and of his having authorised those whom he sent to speak in his Name. That being then fully done, and the precepts of this Religion bearing such an apparent suitableness to our natures, and to the Interests of all human Societies, there is no sort of reason for us to demand more proof, than that which God was pleas'd to give at first. Besides, that all Ages and Nations have the same pretended claim to Miracles, for they are equally his Creatures; and we can fancy no reason why he should be partial to some, more than to others: Now if there were such a constant return of Miracles, the whole Argument from them would in a little time be lost; men grow accustomed to what they see daily, and it makes no Impression, otherwise the wonders of day and night, of Summer and Winter, the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, would work more powerfully on us, than they do. A superfetation of Miracles would have no effect, if it were not a bad one, to make the Divine Power in working them be called in question, and to lead men to impute them to some natural cause, or to some secrets known only to a few. In all which we may conclude,  
that



Luke 16.  
31.

that according to what our Saviour said of *Moses* and the *Prophets*; If men believe not Christ and his Apostles, they would not believe, *tho a man should rise from the dead*, or that the most uncontested Miracle that they would call for, should be wrought for their conviction.

‘ Another objection of the *Infidels* is  
 ‘ taken from the differences that are  
 ‘ between the Gospels, in which the same  
 ‘ passages seem to be variously related in  
 ‘ different words, and in another order of  
 ‘ time; things being by some set down  
 ‘ as done after those things before which  
 ‘ they are set by others. Questions and  
 ‘ Answers are variously stated; they also  
 ‘ find some reasonings that do not seem  
 ‘ concluding, even those that are brought  
 ‘ to convince gainsayers, where there  
 ‘ ought to be more exactness. There  
 ‘ is also a lowness and flatness of style,  
 ‘ that makes the Books seem but mean;  
 ‘ nor are they laid in any exactness of  
 ‘ method, but seem to run in a loose  
 ‘ ramble; besides that there are ma-  
 ‘ ny passages in them that look staring,  
 ‘ as that of Christ’s preaching to the  
 ‘ *Spirits in Prison*, that of *Melchisedeck*,  
 ‘ and some other things that we scarce  
 ‘ know

‘ know what to make of. These things  
 ‘ look not like the products of Divine  
 ‘ Inspiration.

But in answer to all this, we are to consider the different orders of Inspiration, according to the different ends for which it is given. *Moses* had the *Law*, Numb. 12. 8. as the *Jews* confess, by an immediate Communication with God, as one man converses with another; expressed by the phrase of *face to face*, or *mouth to mouth*; such a degree seemed necessary for one who was to deliver an entire System of a Religion of sacred Rites, as well as binding Laws to that Nation. But those who were only sent to call on the people to the obedience of that Law, and to denounce Judgments upon their disobedience, and give out predictions, received a lower degree of Inspiration; the Will of God being represented to them in Dreams and Visions, in which several Representations were Drammatically impressed on their Imaginations, and explained by a secret Intimation made by God to them: others had yet a lower degree, being animated by a Divine Excitation to compose Holy Hymns and Discourses to the edification of the people: now as the *Jews* divide  
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the Books of the *Old Testament* in three different Volumes, according to these various degrees of Inspiration; according to which division our Saviour himself cites the *Old Testament*; in all of which, we find that those holy Penmen writ in such a diversity, that it is apparent every one was left to his own way and Genius as to Style and Composition, some being much loftier than others. Now to apply this to the *New Testament*; it was necessary that men sent to publish such a Doctrine, should be so divinely filled with the knowledge of it, and should be so actuated by that same Influence that assisted them miraculously, as neither to be able to mistake, nor misrepresent any part of it; for the Miracles that they wrought, bringing the World under an obligation to believe them, it was not possible that they could be left to themselves, and be subject to mistakes: but after all this, every one acted according to his natural Temper, and writ in his natural Style; so we see a great variety in the whole Composition and Method of their Discourses and Epistles. The Gospels were writ either by Apostles, or by those who were their companions in labour, and whose Books  
were

were authoris'd by them; but it does not clearly appear what method they intended to follow, whether to observe the order of time, or the relation that one passage might have to another: in this they were left to their natural Faculties; all that was of consequence, was to have the Doctrine and Discourses of Christ, his Actions and his Miracles, faithfully stated to us: but in the method of ordering or expressing these, they might be left to their natural powers; and in this there might be a particular ordering of Providence, that every thing should not be said in the same way by every one as by concert, which might have looked liker a contrivance; it being more genuine, when different persons write in different ways, and all agree in the same account of the Doctrine and Miracles. There may be also many ways of reconciling small diversities, which at this distance may be lost to us: things may appear to be different, that yet may very well agree; of which we find innumerable Instances in Critical Authors: and those passages whose agreement they have made out, give us very good reason to believe, that if we had a greater number

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ber of contemporary Books now extant, we might understand many more better than we can do in this want of them. Passages very like one another might have happened in different times of our Saviour's Life; and that which seems to be one story, related two different ways, may be really two different stories, and both may be exactly related. So that all this objection, instead of derogating from the credit of the Gospel, does really heighten it. As for many answers and reasonings that do not seem to us to be very concluding; we are to consider, that in a short Relation, in which hints are only given, it was impossible to open every thing fully: we are also little acquainted with the methods of the *Jews* arguings at that time. *Philo* and *Josephus* are the only Writers that remain. The one is short upon their Customs and Notions; and he affecting to write elegantly for the *Romans* and *Greeks*, gives us very little light this way. *Philo* does indeed much more; tho' living long at *Alexandria*, and studying the Greek Philosophy, he is so mystical and sublime, that it is not easy always to comprehend him: yet in him we plainly see, how much the *Jews* were delighted

ed with very dark allusions and reasonings: and since it is a just and allowable way of arguing with any, to argue from suppositions granted by them, and suitably to their Principles and Notions, we who plainly see in *Philo*, that the *Jews* used then to explain a great deal of Scripture by a dark *Cabbala*, are not to wonder if some Arguments run in that strain. For instance, we do not see how the last words of the 102 Psalm concerning God's creating all things, and his Eternity and Unchangeableness, belong to the *Messias*, which yet are applied to him in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; <sup>Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.</sup> but we see clear Characters in that Psalm, to shew us that the *Jews* did so expound it; Since those words, *the Hea-*  
*then shall fear the name of the Lord,* <sup>V. 15, 16.</sup> *and all the Kings of the earth his Glory;* *and when the Lord shall build up Si-*  
*on, he shall appear in his Glory;* together with several passages that follow, could not according to the *Cabbala* of the *Jews* be understood of any thing but of the *Messias*, and of the Divine *Shechinah*, that was to rest upon him, and so according to this all the other parts of the Psalm, were also applicable to him.

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If St. Paul argues, that the Promise Gal. 3. 16. was not made to *Seeds*, but to the *Seed* of *Abraham*, which seems a bad inference; since *Seed*, tho in the singular, is yet of a plural signification; this may perhaps be bad *Greek*, unless some corrupt form of Speech had made *Seed* stand for *Son*; but tho the *Greek* is not pure, yet the sense is true, and the Argument in it self is good; St. Paul's design being to let them see, that their being the *Seed* of *Abraham* alone, was not enough to assure them of the favour of God: It was not to all *Abraham's* Posterity that the Promise was made, since neither *Ishmael* nor *Keturah's* Children were comprehended within it: But it belonged only to *Isaac*; and in that contracting the Promise to one, an emblem was given of the *Messias*, in whom singly the blessing of that Covenant was to center, and was not to be spread into the whole Nation that descended from him. So that what fault soever we may find with the *Greek*, the sense is true, and the application is useful; and we do not know, but such a form of Speech might have been then used in common discourse. It is certain, that the Apostles had no Rhetorick,

torick, and often their Grammar is not exact : But this, instead of making against their Writings, does really make for them ; since it shews, that they used no enticing words, nor laboured periods ; no lively Figuers, nor studied Sentences ; all was natural, without Art or Study ; which shewed that they knew they needed no borrowed help to support a Cause in which they were sure Heaven would interpose, and promote its own concerns ; and the veneration with which their Writings were received, and in which they were held, shews that there was somewhat else than the Skill or Eloquence, the persuasives or arguings of the Authors, that begat and maintained their Reputation.

If we find here and there a passage that we know not well what to make of, this is the fate of all Books that were writ at a great distance from us ; the customs and manners of men change strangely in a course of many Ages ; and all Speech, especially that which is figurative and dark, has such relation to these, that if in a Book full of many plain, useful and excellent Theories and Rules, some passages come in amongst them which we plainly see relate to



some Practice or Opinion of which we are not sufficiently informed, such as the *being baptised for the dead*; *having power on the head because of the Angels*, or the like: This is nothing but what occurs to us in all ancient Books, and what we easily bear with in all other Writings, even of a much later Antiquity: We are therefore to make the best use we can of that which we do understand; and to let those other places lie till we can find out their true meaning.

1 Pet. 3.  
19.

Isa. 61. 42.  
Isa. 7. 49.  
Isa. 9. 1, 2.

That of *Christ's going in the Spirit to preach to the Spirits now in Prison*, is perhaps one of these; unless we believe that by *prison* is to be meant, according to the use of that word, and others like it in the Septuagint, the darkened state of the Gentile World, who were shut up in Idolatry, as in a *Prison*, or in *Chains*, under the power of the God of this World. In this sense there is nothing easier to be apprehended than that period; which imports only, that Christ by vertue of the Holy Ghost that he had poured out upon his Apostles, was calling the Gentile World out of their Ignorance and Idolatry: And as in the days of *Noah*, those who were disobedient perished in the Flood,

Flood, while there was an Ark prepared for those who would go into it: So says he, our rising out of the waters, that being the last piece of the baptismal Ceremony, as it was then practised, and being the representation of our rising again with Christ, was that which now *saves us*. In all this, the sense is clear and good, tho the manner of the expression be a little dark.

The way of all the Easterns, even to this day, in all their discourses, being obscure and involv'd, where a great deal is supposed to be already understood; we are not to wonder, if we should find some parts of the *New Testament* writ in that strain. As for that of *Melchisedeck*, as the words lie, they seem to be a riddle indeed; but with a little observation we will find that passage concerning him in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, to be as plain as any thing can be. Heb. 6. 20. Heb. 7. 3. The design of a great part of this Epistle is to shew, that the *Messias* was to be a *Priest*, and was to offer up a *Sacrifice*; but not to be of the Family of *Aaron*, since he was to spring out of the Tribe of *Judah*; nor to be a *Priest* after that *Order*, or according to the Rules of that Institution; but according

Pfalm,  
110. 4.

Lev. 21.  
7, 13. 14.

to the Psalm; to be a *Priest* after the *Order of Melchisedeck*: Now the Rules or Order of the *Aaronical Priesthood* were, that every *Priest* was to be descended from that Line, to be born of a Mother that had not been a *Widow*, or *divorced*; and this gave him who was thus received, a right to transmit his Priesthood to his descendants in a *Genealogy* derived from him. These *Priests* were also tied to their Turns in attending on the Temple, which were called their *Days*, in which they were admitted to serve at Thirty, which was therefore the Age of the beginning of their days; and at Fifty they were dismissed and were no more bound to attend, than if they had been naturally dead; so this was the end of their *Life*, as to their Priesthood. Now in opposition to this, *Melchisedeck* was a *Priest without Father and Mother*; that is, he was immediately called to it of God; and it did not devolve on him by descent, nor was he to derive this in a *Genealogy* to his Posterity: He came not on to an attendance on the service of God at such an Age, nor went he out at another, but was a *Priest of God for ever*; that is, of a long continuance, according to the

the common use of that word, which only imports a constancy in any thing. *Melchisedeck* was a Priest for term of Life, which answers the signification of the word ; but was a Type of him that in the strictest sense was to be a *Priest of God for ever*. Thus if we conster that verse by a reverse, which is very ordinary, of bringing the last word to govern the whole period, placing the word *Priest* at the head of it ; nothing can be plainer and more full to the point that is there driven at. And thus many passages that appear difficult, when they are but slightly looked at, become very intelligible when more attentively examined ; and as we can make this out in a great many Instances ; so if there are others in which we do still stick, we have all possible reason to impute our Ignorance to our wanting a sufficient number of helps, and of Books writ in that Countrey, and at that time, from which we might better collect the Opinions, Customs, Phrases and Allusions of those Parts and Times : For since the Books of our Religion were writ for the use of plain and simple people, to whom they were addressd, and in whose hands they were to be



put; they must have been writ in a popular, and not in a Rhetorical or Philosophical Style; which tho it is more correct and more lasting, yet it is both drier and more laboured, and shews always more of Art than of Nature.

I have now gone over all the Heads that I thought necessary to make this discourse full in all its parts: I have left nothing behind me that seemed to be material: I have not been afraid to lay open all the secrets of Infidelity, with the utmost strength that I could ever find them urged in; because I was fully satisfied in my own mind, that I could answer them all. There is only one particular remaining, which I have reserved to the last place, because it affords a proper conclusion to this Discourse. 'One of the main things in which *Infidels* support themselves, is, 'that tho they speak out, yet let others 'deny or disguise their Thoughts as 'much as they please, either out of Interest or Modesty, since their Doctrine 'has an ill sound in the World; yet 'they think with them, because they 'live with them, and not according to 'the Doctrine which they espouse: and 'they

' they seem to conclude with some advantage, That we collect what men think, much more infallibly from what they do, than from what they say; And this they urge with much Malice; And would to God that I could add with as much injustice against too many of our selves; Whose arguings upon these Heads are so much the less to be regarded than other mens, because we have espoused the Cause, and have made it our own, both in point of Reputation and Interest: I wish and pray that we may all resolve on the only effectual Confutation of which this is capable, by setting such a pattern to the World, and leading such exemplary Lives, that in these they may see how firmly we believe that to which we endeavour to persuade others, who wait for our halting, and are critical in observing our failings, and malicious in aggravating them. It gave the chief strength to the first Apologies that were made for Christianity, that they durst appeal to the Lives of the Christians, to give the World a right Idea of their Doctrine; whereas we must now decline that Argument, and appeal from the Lives of Christians to their Doctrines:

Yet

Yet wheresoever numbers embrace any thing, there must especially in a course of many Ages, follow upon it a great declining from what was while they were fewer in number; and that the thing was newer and fresher upon their Thoughts. Besides, that the best Christians are those who are the least known, their Modesty and Humility leading them to hide their best Actions; whereas those who make the most noise, and the greatest show, are for the most part hot or designing men. A man may also be really a much better man than one would take him to be, that sees him only on one side, and does not know him wholly.

The frailties of some mens natures will hang heavy upon them, and sometimes burst out even in scandalous instances, notwithstanding all their principles and strugglings to the contrary: Therefore upon the whole matter, tho we cannot deny but that there is too much truth in this prejudice, yet it is but a prejudice, and cannot bear much weight: So that it is a most unaccountable piece of folly to venture mens Souls and their eternal Concerns upon a reflection, that as it is not generally true, so has no solidity in it: Yet after all, the use that we ought  
to

to make of it is, that we ought to frame our own Lives, and the Lives of all that are in our power, as much as may be to a Conformity to our Doctrines, that so the World may observe in us such a true and unaffected course of solid Verue and useful Piety, that we may again recover that Argument, which we have too much lost, for the truth and beauty of our Religion, from the Lives of those who believe and practise it; and that so the *Apologies* now writ, which in all other respects are the strongest that ever were, may again have their full perfection, and their entire effect upon the World.

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## DISCOURSE II.

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Concerning the

# DIVINITY

AND

## DEATH of CHRIST.

**T**H E main Articles of the Christian Religion, as it is distinguished from all other Religions, are those which relate to the Person and Sufferings of Christ; and therefore it is of the last importance for us to have our Notions concerning these, right and truly stated: and that the rather, because in the Age in which we live, the laughing at every thing that is resolved into a Mystery, passes for a piece of Wit, and has the Character of a free and inquisitive mind. And while some would have every thing taken

taken for a Mystery, others set their strength to the decrying of every thing that is proposed as such, as if that were an Imposition upon Human Nature, and the bringing Mankind under a Yoke that it cannot and ought not to bear.

Therefore, that I may treat of this matter in a proper Method, and with a due clearness, I shall first in general consider this prejudice against all Mysteries; and when I have thus prepared my way, I shall come to the consideration of those which I intend now to treat upon. *Mystery* in its first and common signification, stood for some Sacred Rites by which Men were initiated into any form of Religion, which the Priests of corrupt Religions kept as *Secrets*, that either they might by that concealment, encrease the value of them; which if they had been generally known, might have appeared so slight and mean, as to have become contemptible, or that they might hide some Immoralities or frauds in the management of them; and all those Theories which were kept up from the Herd, and only Communicated to confiding Persons, were also given out under this Name, as things known only to those that were initiated. In this sense

sense there is no secret in Christianity ; no hidden Rites, nor concealed Doctrines that are not trusted to the whole body of Christians. But by an extent of the use of this word, it came to be applied among the Christians of the first Ages, to those Holy Rites of our Religion that were Instituted by our Saviour, and which they also called *Sacraments* ; because in those, the Vows that tie us to God in this Religion, were both made and renewed : The Venerable Truths of this Faith, and Secrets then made publick, were also by *S. Paul* expressed by this Name, which as it is now commonly understood, signifies some Theory, or point of Doctrine that we believe ; because we are persuaded that it is revealed to us in Scripture ; tho' we cannot distinctly apprehend how it can be ; and that in the common view which is offered concerning it, it seems to contradict our common Notions.

In this sense it is opposed by many ,  
 ' whosay, ' There can be no such thing in  
 ' Religion : that every thing of which we  
 ' can form no distinct Idea, is nothing to  
 ' us, and that we cannot believe it : since  
 ' we can only believe that of which we  
 ' have some thought ; God having made  
 ' us



' us reasonable Creatures, cannot intend  
 ' that we should act contrary to our Na-  
 ' tures; and believing any thing contra-  
 ' ry to our apprehensions, seems to be  
 ' a flat contradiction to our faculties;  
 ' and it is a question, whether those who  
 ' plead for Mysteries, can believe them  
 ' themselves, after all their Zeal for them:  
 ' since a Man can no more think that to  
 ' be true, of which he has no Idea, than  
 ' a Man can see in the dark; for let him  
 ' affirm ever so much that he sees, all o-  
 ' ther persons who perceive it to be dark,  
 ' are sure that he sees nothing. It seems to  
 ' be the peculiar Character and Beauty  
 ' of the Christian Religion, that it is our  
 ' *reasonable service*, or the *Rational* way  
 ' of Worshipping God: and therefore  
 ' those who would propose it as contain-  
 ' ing Mysteries, under a pretence of  
 ' magnifying it, do rather lessen it: and  
 ' give advantages to the Enemies of it  
 ' to expose it on that account. For upon  
 ' this supposition of there being some  
 ' *Mysteries* in it, those who corrupt it  
 ' seem to have a ground given them for  
 ' raising a much greater super structure:  
 ' and for silencing all objections against  
 ' their unconceivable Doctrines, with  
 ' this word *Mystery*, which being so apt  
 ' to

‘ to be abused and carried too far, seems  
‘ to give a just prejudice against it: upon  
‘ this ground they conclude, that we are  
‘ to believe nothing but that which we  
‘ can distinctly apprehend: and that if  
‘ any word or expression in Scripture  
‘ seems to import any other thing, we  
‘ must soften these to a sense agreeable  
‘ to our faculties: but that we ought  
‘ never to yield to a sense that is un-  
‘ conceivable; which as they argue, is  
‘ still nothing to us.

This is the Foundation of their Reasonings: and upon this it is that they justify or excuse some expositions that seem forced and unnatural: for they say, they are sure they are not to be understood in the *Mysterious* sense, because of this general Theory; and therefore they must give them the best sense that they can find that is suited to their Principles. Upon the right stating of this, the whole matter turns; and because this whole Speculation is urged to much worse purposes by *Atheists* and *Deists*, it will be necessary to consider it carefully.

It is certain we can apprehend nothing, but as our faculties represent it

to us ; no more than we can see Sounds, or hear Colours : it is also certain, that we can receive nothing that contradicts our faculties : for let a Man strain for it as much as he will, he cannot believe that any thing both is, and is not, at the same time ; or that two and three do not make five, and neither more nor less. The objects of sense do also determine us; for when we see a thing clearly before us, we cannot force our selves to think, or so much as to doubt that we see it not. But after all, there are many things which we believe upon the report of others, or upon the Consequences of our own Observation, that seem to be so far out of our own reach, that our faculties cannot easily receive them : For instance, let us make a discourse of *light*, and of *seeing*, to a *Blind-man* : Let us tell him, that a vast Globe, called the Sun, which as he feels, creates a great heat in the Air at some Hours, in some Seasons of the Year, gives such pushes to infinite numbers of small parts of matter, that they are upon that put in a vast motion ; and that as these strike upon every resisting body, and recoil from it, they carry in them some mould of its figure and bigness ;  
and

and of another thing too called *Colour* of which he can frame no sort of Notion; and that these in this motion, striking upon that which he can feel to, which is his *Eye*, do go through it, and enter at a small passage; that is, in a second coat of his *Eye*, which an Anatomist may make him feel to: and within it, as they have passed through those humours that he can also feel, those small movers do at last so strike against the most inward Coat, that from thence a Man may know the figure, matter, bigness, and distance, of such objects as the blind Man can only feel to, and that a great many Miles of; and that with one glance of his *Eye*, he can see many Millions of objects at once, and be able to judge concerning them, and concerning their distance from him, and from one another, a great way off: and that he can see the Sun and Stars, tho' distant from us many Millions of Millions of Miles. Now tho' it is to be confessed, that a blind Man can form no true Idea of all this, yet he may be bound to believe it, not only from the testimony of all seeing Men, but from his own observation: for by setting a Man at a considerable

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distance



distance from him, and holding up towards him all such things as he knows by feeling, he by the other Man's answers may perceive plainly that he knows them, tho' he not only cannot apprehend how this is done, but seems to raise whole Schemes of Impossibilities against it. But to give another Instance of this, that will be more universally sensible; let a Man practis'd in Geometry, shew a Clown a small Quadrant, and tell him that by it he can measure the Compass of the whole Earth, and the distance between the Earth and the Heavenly Orbs: he will laugh at him as a boasting vain Man, or one that intends to impose upon his credulity: but if this Mathematician will, to convince him, take the height of any Building, or Precipice that he can measure, the Clown when he finds that the Observation agrees with the length of his Plumb-line, is somewhat convinced, and is apt to think, either that the two Stations, and the Computations which he saw him make in Paper, were Magical Spells, or that he has a Method that leads him to this by degrees of which he himself is utterly ignorant: so by  
all

all this, it is plain that a Man may be bound from some Authorities and Observations, to believe some things of which he not only has no Notion, but fancies he has very clear ones to the contrary.

From hence I will make another step to shew, that indeed we believe almost every thing that we do believe, under the like difficulties and disadvantages: for Instance, we know that we move, and yet there is something very like a demonstration against Motion; let A. move from B. to C. two supposed contiguous Points in a supposed Instant D. A when it moves, is supposed to be in B. so in that Instant it cannot go to C. because it is supposed to be in B. and it cannot be in the same Instant both in B. and C. for then it should be in two places at once, that is, in the same Instant; therefore in the Instant in which it is in B. it cannot go to C. and so it cannot do it in any other Instant, because it is still supposed to be in B. When a Man has turned this over and over in his Thoughts, he is indeed very sure that it is false, and is very certain that he moves; yet he feels a contradiction to

that in his reasoning, from which it is not so easy for him to free himself, as he might at first view apprehend.

This of Motion carries me on to a greater difficulty, whether there are vacuities in Nature, or not; that is, distances between Bodies in which there is no sort of Body at all. It is very hard to apprehend how things can be either of these ways. Motion it self, Condensation and Rarefaction, Weight, and the crouding of all things to the Centre, can hardly be explained without admitting a *Vacuum*. And yet as our thoughts cannot receive the Idea of it; so the whole connexion of things, the whole Chain of Matter, and the Communication of Motion from the Heavenly Orbs down to us, is all broken and interrupted; nor can we see how the Frame of Nature can hold together, if a *Vacuum* is once allowed. So that tho' we are certain that either it is, or it is not; yet when one weighs well the difficulties of both Hypotheses, he is so equally ballanced, that he is apt to lean against that whose difficulties were the last, and are the freshest in his thoughts. If from this we go into the Compositions

tion of Matter, we are sure that either it is divisible on to Infinity, and that there are no Indivisible Points in it; or that it has Points, either such was have no Parts, or extended Atoms that may have Parts, but that are Indiscernible. It must be one or other, of these that must be true: for they may be reduc'd to the terms of a Contradiction, since either Matter is divisible into Infinity, or not; if not, then either those Indivisibles have parts, or they have not: So that it is plain one of them must be true; and yet every one who has gone through that famous question, must see that there are such Insurmountable difficulties against every one of them, that they seem to amount to a demonstration.

I shall Instance but in one other particular, which though it is that of all others that we should understand the best, yet carries no fewer nor less difficulties in it, and that is our own Composition. We plainly perceive that we think, and that we act freely: Then either this rises out of meer matter, or we have another principle in us of another nature and order of beings, that thinks and



moves, both it self and also our Bodies. That meer Matter can have no liberty, and that it cannot think, seems to be evident of it self; all our Observations of Matter shew it to be passive, and to act necessarily, and that it neither has in it self a power of motion, nor liberty, but always goes in a Chain: and *thought* being perceived by us to be one simple act, it must flow from a single principle that is uncompounded: but on the other hand, what should Chain down such a subtile being, into so gross a one as body; and how a thought should move it, or how the motions of Matter should affect the thinking-principle; how they should give it either pleasure or pain; how the mind should be furnished from the body with such Images and Figures, by which it remembers, imagines, argues and speaks; how these should be so subtile, and yet stick so long, and lie in such order, are things that the more a Man dwells upon them, and spreads them out before himself, he not only comprehends them the less, but seems to find such difficulties against them, that he is lost, and knows not what to think of himself.

When

When a thinking man lays all these, and a great many more, which will arise from these hints, if he has a mind to look for them, together, they shew him how limited our faculties are, how little able we are to dive into the nature of things; and that we can much more easily raise difficulties, than solve them. Yet the use that I plead for in all this is, neither to lead men to be sceptical, and believe nothing, nor to be too implicate to believe every thing: but only to evince this, That we may be bound either from our own Observation, or upon the Authority of other Persons, to believe some things, of which we are not able to give our selves a distinct account, nor to answer the objections that may lie against them.

Great difference is to be made between the believing a thing, and the apprehending the manner of it. If we have sufficient Authority to guide our Belief, it will be no just objection against it, that the manner of it cannot be explained: And this is yet more evidently true, if the Being in which a thing is proposed to our Belief is of an Order and Rank above us; and most  
of

of all, if it is infinitely above us. We perceive in the gradations of our own being, that a Child is not capable of those Thoughts which he himself will come to have when he is more ripened: And a man of low Education cannot frame those apprehensions which are easy to those who are born and bred in better circumstances. If then the differences of Age and Education make thoughts that are plain and easy to some, seem unconceivable to others; this ought, when applied to the Divine Essence, make us conclude, that there may be Mysteries in that Being, of infinite Perfection and Elevation above us, far beyond all our apprehensions: And therefore, if God lets out any hints of any such to us, we are to receive them in such a plain sense as the words do naturally bear: And if this should happen to import that which does not at all agree with our Conceptions of other things, we ought not to wrest it to another sense that seems easier to us.

We can frame no distinct Idea of that Infinite Essence, and it were not Infinite if we could. How things were made out of nothing, is above our reach; how

how it thinks, is an amazing difficulty; whether its Acts are, as is commonly believed, one with the Essence, or distinct from it. This Essence having necessary Existence, in its first Conception, those free Acts that might not have been, are not easily apprehended to be one with his Essence; and if those Acts are said not to be free, then all things exist by the same necessity by which God exists; for if the *Immanent* Acts of God are one with his Essence, then since all the *Transient* Acts do certainly follow his *Immanent* ones, there is an Universal Necessity equally spread over the whole frame of Nature; and God can do nothing otherwise than he does: But if those Acts of God are different from his Essence, and distinct from it, such as our Thoughts are; then here are Accidents in God, and a succession of Thoughts, which seem inconsistent with infinite Perfection, that is, all one Eternal and Unchangeable Act. Here is a difficulty that perhaps few reflect on; but it is every whit as great and as unaccountable as any of the Mysteries of Revealed Religion can be pretended to be; tho this arises out of  
Natural



Natural Religion. If to this, we add all that we believe concerning the Attributes of God, his being every where, his knowing every thing, his Providence in governing all things; together with those unsearchable Methods in which it exerts it self; we must acknowledge that *he dwells in a Light to which we cannot approach*: But that as the present frame of our Bodies, and structure of our Eyes, cannot bear the looking steadfastly on the Sun, or the being brought much nearer him, of which yet we may be capable in another texture of our Eyes and Bodies; so in this state in which we have narrow Notions, and gross Imaginations, we are not able to frame distinct Ideas even of those Attributes of God, of which we make no doubt, but yet we find such difficulties in apprehending them, that they do blind and confound us, and put us to a stand in all our thinkings about them: But for all that we still go on, believing firmly those his Attributes.

In fine, We are to make a great difference between those plain perceptions, we have either of the objects of sense, or of simple Theories, and the difficulties and deductions

deductions that belong to them: The one is the voice of our Faculties, and we cannot oppose it, or believe against it, because it is in some sort the voice of God within us, since it is the natural result of those powers that he has put in us; but it is quite another thing when we go to Inferences, and to frame difficulties. In this appears our Ignorance of the nature of things, of the several ways and manners in which they may operate, and of the Consequences that seem to belong to them; because we are apt to judge of every Being by our selves, and have not extent enough of thought and observation to reason always true, or to judge exactly: So that this must be settled as a clear difference between plain perceptions, and a train of Consequences; we are always to be determined by the one, but not by the other. To instance it then in that which is now before us; we have a plain preception, that no Being can be both One and Three in the same respect, because we are sure that is a plain Contradiction, which cannot possibly be true; but if a thing is represented as both One and Three, this in different respects may be true.

Thus

Thus I have dispatched this first part, in which it seemed the more necessary to state this matter aright, that so it may appear, that no part of the plea for Mysteries, belongs to Transubstantiation, since here is the fullest evidence of sense, in an object of sense, which plainly represents to us *Bread* and *Wine* to be still the same after Consecration, that they were before; and therefore we can never be certain of any thing, if in this case we are bound to believe in contradiction to such a plain and simple perception; but this is not at all applicable to any speculations concerning the Divine Nature.

I go on from this Previous Discourse, to the Subject it self that I am now upon; in which there have been three different Opinions: the one is, That Christ was a Divine Person, miraculously conceived, and wonderfully qualified for revealing the Will of God to the World; which he did in so excellent a manner, and set so perfect a pattern both in his Life and Death, that in Reward of that, God has given him the Government of the World; putting the Divine Authority in him, and commanding him to be Worshipped and Acknowledged as  
God,

God, and has subjected both Angels and Men to him ; tho he had no Existence before he was formed in the Virgin's Womb , and no other nature but that which he derived from his Miraculous Conception.

Others have thought that there was an Essence created by God before all Worlds, by which he made and governs all things, and that this Essence which was like God, dwelt in *Christ Jesus* ; and was by the Gospel revealed to the World : So that all were bound to honour and obey him. Some of these called him a Being of a Nature quite *different from*, and *unlike* the Divine Nature ; which was found to be of an unacceptable Sound ; so others softened it by saying, that he was of an Essence *like the Father* : But this was only a milder way of speaking, since if this Being was created, so that once it was not, its nature must be essentially *unlike* the Father ; for sure nothing can be more unlike, than created and uncreated. And by *Likeness*, such men could only understand a Moral Likeness of imitation and resemblance ; so that he might be *like God*, as we are called ; to be *like him*, tho in vastly higher degrees.

The



The 3<sup>d</sup>. Opinion is, That the God-head by the Eternal *Word*, the Second in the Blessed Three, dwelt in, and was so inwardly united to the humane Nature of *Jesus Christ*, that by vertue of it, God and Man were truly one Person, as our Soul and Body make one Man. And that this Eternal *Word* was truly God, and as such is worshipped and adored as the proper object of Divine Adoration. By those of this persuasion, the *Name Person* came to be applied to the *Three*, which the Scripture only calls by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, or *Word*, and *Holy Ghost*, on design to discover those who thought that these *Three* were only different names of the same thing: But by *Person* is not meant such a Being as we commonly understand by that word, a compleat intelligent Being, distinct from every other Being: but only that every one of that Blessed *Three*, has a peculiar distinction in himself, by which he is truly different from the other two.

This is the Doctrine that I intend now to explain to you. When I say *Explain*, I do not mean that I will pretend to tell you how this is to be

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understood, and in what respect these *Persons* are believed to be *One*, and in what respects they are *Three*. By explaining a *Mystery*, can only be meant the shewing how it is laid down and revealed in Scripture; for to pretend to give any further account of it, is to take away its Mysteriousness, when the manner how it is in it self is offered to be made intelligible. In this too many both Ancients and Moderns have perhaps gone beyond due bounds; while some were pleased with the Platonical Notions of *Emanations*, and a Fecundity in the Divine Essence: For we have footsteps of a Tradition as Ancient, even among *Heathens*, as any we can trace up, which limited the *Emanations* to *Three*: And these thought there was a *Production*, or rather an *Eduction* of two out of the first: In the same manner that some Philosophers thought that Souls were propagated from Souls; and the figure by which this was explain'd, being that of one Candle's being lighted at another; this seems to have given the rise to those words, *Light of Light*. It is certain, many of the Fathers fell often into this conceit, and in

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this

this way of explaining this matter, they have said many things which intimate that they believed an inequality between the Persons, and a Subordination of the Second and Third to the First: So that by the *same Substance* or *Essence*, they do in many places express themselves as if they only meant the same Being in a general Sense, as all human Souls are of the same *Substance*; that is, the same order or sort of Beings; and they seemed to entitle them to different operations; not only in an Oeconomical way, but thought that one did that which the other did not. This was indeed more easily to be apprehended; but it seemed so directly to assert Three Gods, which was very contrary to many most express Declarations both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, in which the Unity of the Deity is so often held forth, that therefore others took another way of explaining this; making it their Foundation, that the Deity was one Numerical Being. They then observed, that the Sun, besides his own Globe, had an Emanation of Light, and another of Heat, which had different Operations; and all from the same *Essence*, and that the  
Soul

Soul of Man had both Intellection and Love, which flowed from its Essence: So they conceiv'd that the primary Act of the Divine Essence, was its *Wisdom*, by which it saw all things, and in which, as in an *inward Word*, it designed all things: This they thought might be called the *Son*, as being the *Generation* of the Eternal Mind; while from the Fountain-Principle, together with this *inward Word*, there did arise a *Love* that was to issue forth, and that was to be the Soul of the Creation; and was more particularly to animate the Church: And in this *Love*, all things were to have Life and Favour. This was rested on, and was afterwards dressed up with a great deal of dark nicety by the Schools, and grew to be the Universally received Explanation: Tho many have thought, that the term *Son*, did not at all belong to the Blessed *Three*, but only to our Saviour, as he was the *Messias*; the *Jews* having had that Notion of the *Messias*, that as he was to be the King of *Israel*, so he was to be the *Son of God*: We find *Nathanael* addressed himself thus to him; and when the High-Priest adjur'd our



Saviour to tell if he was the *Messias*, he knits these two together, *Art thou the Christ the Son of the most High God?* which shews, that they did esteem these two as one and the same thing. Now some Criticks do apprehend, that since in many places the term *Son of God*, has manifestly a relation to Christ as the *Messias*; there is in this an Uniformity in the whole Scripture Style, so that every where by the phrase *Son of God*, we are to understand *Jesus*, as the *Messias*, in which the human Nature being the first Conception, they conceive that all the places importing an Inferiority of the *Son* to the *Father*, have no difficulty in them, since they are only to be understood of *Jesus* as the *Messias*; but that the Divine Principle that was in him, is in the strictness of Speech to be called as *St. John* does, *the Word*. So that by this, if true, all the Speculations concerning an Eternal Generation, are cut off in the strict sense of the words, tho in a larger sense every emanation of what sort soever, may be so called. These, and a great deal more of this kind that might be further branched out,  
and

and enlarged upon, are the Explanations that Divines have offered at upon this Mystery. But it may be justly questioned, whether by these they have either made it to be better understood, or to be more firmly believed; or whether others have not taken advantage to represent those subtilties as dregs, either of the *Æones* of the *Valentinians*, or of the Platonical Notions; which last being in so high and just a Reputation among the *Greeks*, it is plain, that many of the Ancients thought it was no small service to the Christian Religion, to shew a great Affinity between it and *Plato's* Theology: and it being long before these Theories were well stated and settled, it is no wonder if many of the Fathers have not only differed from one another, but even from themselves in speaking upon this Argument. While men go about to explain a thing of which they can frame no distinct *Idea*, it is very natural for them to run out into a vast Multiplicity of words; into great length, and much darkness and confusion. Many improper Similies will be urged, and often impertinent reasonings will be made

use of. All which are the unavoidable Consequences of a man's going about to explain to others that which he does not distinctly understand himself.

This in general is the sum of the Received Doctrine; That as there is but *One God*, so in that undivided Essence, there are *Three* that are really different from one another, and are more than only three Names, or three outward Oeconomies; and that the *Second* of these was in a most intimate and unconceivable manner united to a perfect Man; so that from the human and Divine Nature thus united, there did result the *Person of the Messias*, who was both *God and Man*,

Here new Subtilties have been found out, to state the formal Notion of a *Person*, which was supposed to consist in a special *Subsistence*; so that it has been thought, that the human nature in *Christ*, had no special *Subsistence* of its own, tho it was not easy to explain this Notion; since if *Subsistence* belonged to the Human Nature, it might seem that it was not perfect, if it had not a proper *Subsistence*. A Hypostatical Union was proposed as a term fit to explain

plain this by, that is to say, the Human nature was believed to subsist by the *Subsistence* of the Word; but it was not easy to make this the more intelligible, by offering a Notion full as unintelligible as it self, to explain it by. Tho indeed this is a point, in which it is more possible for us to arrive at distinct Ideas, or somewhat very like them, than the other. We plainly see, that the Union of our Souls to our Bodies, consists in a Harmony that God has settled between such an Organisation of matter, and such Sensations that arise out of the different motions of this matter so organiz'd: Upon which, this matter is in many things under the power of the Mind, which by its thoughts commands and moves it: and it has from it a continual Influence and Actuation that is called *Life*; so that the Union of the Soul and Body is the result of such a proper Harmony of the Body, according to the Mechanical Structure of its necessary parts, as makes it fit to give proper Sensations to the Mind, and to receive and obey the Impressions of the Mind; the breaking of which Harmony brings on death.



From hence we may apprehend several degrees of the Union of a thinking being with Matter : The lowest, is that of Infants, where there is a thought, but a thought so entirely under the Impressions of Matter, that it is not able to rise above them, and either to think of any thing else, or to stop the Violence of these Impressions : So here is a Spirit wholly immersed in Matter, that is in every thing under its dominion, and is a slave to it ; and in this state Ideots continue their whole life long. A second degree is that of men in this Life duly ripened, in which their Minds are as to their Sensations still subject to Matter ; that is, they must feel pain or pleasure, according to the dispositions of Matter ; but then there is a power in the Soul to govern Matter, and not to yield to those Sensations : So that there is a lasting struggle between the Sensations that arise from the Body, and the Cogitations that spring in the Mind, which have the better of one another by turns. Here the Soul and Body are as it were equally yoked together, only the Soul may by the use of Reason and Liberty be so assisted,  
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as to have the ascendant over the Body for the greatest part.

From these we may conceive two other degrees of Union, which may be between Souls and Bodies. The one is a State in which the Soul shall have an entire Authority over Matter, but yet shall need the assistance of it, as a necessary mean of Motion; and as having in it a repository of Images and Figures, for memory and imagination: So that in such a state, the Body shall have no power at all over the Mind, but shall only serve it as Instruments do a Mechanick: and this seems to be a Philosophical Notion of the use that our Bodies shall be of to us in another State; in which they shall be no more clogs upon us, to give us uneasy or grievous sensations; but shall only be the proper Machines for Motion and Memory; and for such like uses, in which the Body when well tuned can serve the Mind. A Fourth degree, may be a State in which a Mind may be so entirely perfect in its self, and in its own acts, that it may have no need of a Body upon its own account, but only  
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in order to the ministring to another Spirit that is yet under the power of Matter, to give it either Warnings, or Assistances; which perhaps it cannot Communicate, but through the Conveyance, or by the Mechanical Motions and Impressions of one piece of Matter upon another. Upon this account, and for this end, Spirits of the highest form; nay God himself may at some times, and for some unknown ends, make use of a Body, and put it into such a form, and so actuate it, as thereby to communicate some Light or Influence to minds that are yet much immerfed in Matter. These are all the ways that we can apprehend of a Mind's assuming matter, and being united to it, which is the having it under its Actuation, or Authority; so that the Acts of the Mind give such Impressions to the Body, as govern and command it. By the same way of thinking, we may apprehend yet more easily, how one Spirit may be united to another; which is, when a superior Spirit has another of an Inferior Order so entirely under its conduct and Impressions, that the Inferior receives constant

constant Communications of Light and Impulse from the Superior : and as the Body lives by the presence of the Soul, even when it does not by any distinct Act work upon it, or enliven it ; so a superior Mind may have a perpetual conduct of an inferior, even when it leaves it to its own liberty, and does not break in upon it by any immediate enlightning or animating of it. And thus we may conceive the *Subsistence* of an Intelligent Being to be its acting entirely in it self, or upon matter united to it, without any other Spirit's being constantly present to it, actuating it, or having it under any immediate Vital and inseparable Influence. This seems to give some light towards the *Idea* of a *Subsistence*, as separated from the *Essence*, and by consequence of one person's Subsistence in, by, and from another. I do not pretend to say, that this is the strict Notion of *Subsistence*, but it is the nearest thing that I can imagine to it, which will at least help to form some general *Idea* of it ; for these being all the distinct Notions that we can frame of the Union of Spirits to other Spirits, or of Spirits to Matter, they



they will help us to a more distinct Apprehension of the Union of the Eternal *Word* to a Human Nature, by which it assumed the *Man* into such an inward and immediate Oeconomy, that it did always actuate, illuminate and conduct him, as we perceive our Souls do our Bodies.

This is the clearest thought that we give our selves of that Human Nature's subsisting by the *Subsistence* of the *Word* that dwelt in it. This also agrees well with the Expressions of the *Word's dwelling in Flesh*, and of the *bodily Indwelling* of the *Fulness of the Godhead in Christ Jesus*. But having now shewed how far these things may become in some sort intelligible to us, I go to my main Design, which is to examine no longer whether this ought to be believed or not, in case we should find it very expressly affirmed in the *New Testament*, for I hope I have already made that out fully: Therefore the only question that now lies before me, is, Whether this is contained in the *New Testament*, or not? for if it is in it, and is a part of its Doctrine, then since that Doctrine is proved to be all true, and

and revealed by God, this must be likewise true, if it is a part of it. This I will also yield, That Authorities brought to prove Articles that are so sublime as to rise above our ways of Apprehension, ought to be made out by a greater fulness of express Proofs, than bare Precepts of Morality, or more easily received Notions; for as among men, every thing requires a proportion'd degree of proof, as it is more or less credible of it self: So in Religion, we ought not to suppose, that if God intended to reveal any thing to us, that should pose our Understandings, he would only do it in hints or in words, and in expressions of doubtful signification; therefore I yield, that those who deny *Mysteries*, have a right to demand full, express and copious proofs of them. I will therefore only dwell upon those proofs that are very comprehensive, and will not rest upon single passages, which I leave to Books of Controversy or Criticism, in which these are fully opened and made out: My not using these, is not from the distrust that I have of the force that is in them, but I intend to lay this matter before you,  
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in some observations that take in a great deal, and that if they are true, do give a clearer Light, and a more unquestioned Authority to single passages, since those agree with the frame of the whole.

I need not spend many words to prove, that the main Design of Revealed Religion, was to drive all Idolatry out of the World, either the worshipping of other Gods besides the true, or the worshipping the True God under a Bodily Representation. This is so expressly set out by *Moses*, and so much insisted on, and prosecuted by the *Prophets*, that it will admit of no dispute; nor is there any made about it. To guard this Capital Article of Religion, God when he sent *Moses* to be the Deliverer and the Lawgiver of the *Jews*, gave himself a particular Name that was to be peculiar to himself; so that the Kings or false Gods might be called by the other names of the Deity, yet this was never given to any of them. The *Old Testament* being put in Greek by the *Jews*, the Name *Jehovah* was throughout Translated by them *κύριος*. I do not insist upon the Article being  
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prefixed to it; for tho it is so very often, yet I am convinc'd that there is no arguing from that, since there is such variety in the use of it. Now the *Greek Translation of the Old Testament* being that which was the most read and us'd by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, in the whole *Phrasiology* of their Sacred reading, *κύριος* and *Jehovah* were one and the same thing. The Authors of the *New Testament*, as they were *Jews* by Birth and Education, so they offered the Gospel first to the *Jews*. In all that they writ, we see plainly that they had them in their eye, either to convince them, or at least to answer their Prejudices and Objections. And it is certain, that how much soever that Nation was Anciently bent to Idolatry, they were ever after the times of the *Maccabees* so entirely cured of it, that they could not bear any approach to it, or shadow of it. Yet the Apostles through the whole *New Testament* call our Saviour by the Name *κύριος*; sometimes he is called *Lord*, or the *Lord*, that is with or without the Article, and that simply without any Addition; sometimes *my Lord*, or *our Lord*,



Lord; but most frequently the *Lord Jesus Christ*, or *Jesus Christ our Lord*: These indeed return so often, especially in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in the *Epistles*, that they could not be all copi'd out in many pages. Now this being so Sacred a Name to the *Jews*, it is impossible to imagine that the *Apostles* could intend other in it, but that the *Jehovah* dwelt so immediately and bodily in *Christ Jesus*, that by that Indwelling he was truly *Jehovah*. This will be more evident, if we consider the Glorious Appearance of God in the Holy of Holies, in which there was a Cloud, and within the Cloud a *Glory* that did often shine out, to shew an acceptance of their Sacrifices and Prayers, or to give particular Answers, when the Holy Priest came with the Urim in the Breast-plate to consult God. This was a continued Miracle, and a lively Emblem of the Deity, which is full of Light and Glory in it self, but is environ'd with such impenetrable darkness to us, that we can neither comprehend his Nature nor his Operations, but as he is pleased to shine out and shew somewhat of himself to us. But  
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this was yet more than a bare Miracle, it was a constant Presence and Inhabitation of God, who not only kept the Cloud and Light from being dissipated, which otherwise must have hap'ned according to the Laws of Matter and Motion; but he was so signally present in it, that in the whole Style of the Old Testament, *Jehovah* was said to dwell between the Cherubins, to shine out, to shew the Light of his Countenance, or to hide his face, and cover himself with a thick Cloud. He was said to be in his Temple, to sit on his Throne; with a great many other Expressions, which relate to this; *The Lord of Glory*, and the *God of Glory*; his appearing in *Glory*, his coming with *Glory*, do all belong to this. From whence it is plain, that a constant and immediate visible Indwelling of the *Jehovah* was, according to the Scripture-Phrase, said to be *Jehovah*, which was applied to nothing else. It is further to be observed, That as the Jews called this the *Glory* simply, or the *Schechinah*, that is, the *Inhabitation*; so it was wanting in the Second Temple; and this was indeed its greatest want, which no doubt occasion'd the chief Grief of those who

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mourned when they saw the Second Temple ; since to one who was an *Israelite* indeed, this was the real Glory ; the Gold and the Silver being poor matters in comparison with this. These  
<sup>a</sup> Hag. 6, 7, 8, 9. were comforted by the Prophet *Haggai*, who promised to them in the Name of God, that *God would fill the house with his Glory* ; he also takes off meaner minds from their opinion of a defect for the want of Gold and Silver, since that was all God's : So that they offer'd up nothing in that to him, that was not his already. The *Glory* that is promis'd, was to exceed the *Glory of the former House* ; to which two great Characters are added, the one, *that he would shake all Nations* ; that is, an Appearance should come, in which the *Gentiles* should be concerned in an Eminent manner : The other is, *that in that place he would give Peace*. Now let any unprejudic'd man consider, if *Herod's* rebuilding the Temple can in any sort be thought to answer this ; especially the *Glory* being both in the true Value of things, and in the Prophetick Style, to be understood of that signal Presence of God in the Temple, which was its solid and true *Glory*.  
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Since then the *Jews* looked for this, and that, by many Prophecies concerning the *Messias*, mention was made of *his appearing in Glory*; this could be meant no other way by them, but that either he was to restore that Glory to the Temple, or that he was to have it in himself; and since it was to be *greater than that of the former House*, there must have been some eminent Character in it beyond the former: In particular, the whole World was to be struck with it, which is expressed in the Prophetick Strain, by *the shaking the Heavens and the Earth, the Sea and the dry Land*; and *the shaking of all Nations*. I do not argue from that which follows, of *the desire of all Nations*, because I know it is capable of another Translation, and I will build upon sure grounds. This *Glory* was likewise to *bring Peace* with it; which cannot be literally understood, since the *Jews* had very little *Peace*, either from the days of *Herod*, to whom they apply this; or from the days of our Saviour, to whom the Christians apply it. Now from all this it is to be inferred, that the Apostles applying univer-

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- fally the name *Kópios* to our Saviour, could mean no other, but that he was the true *Jehovah* by a more perfect Indwelling of the Deity in him, than that had been which was in the Cloud. This *Glory* was *greater* than the other; for the other dwelt in a Mass of meer Matter, whereas this dwelt in the Soul and Body of our Saviour; and a Soul is much a perfecter sort of Being than the purest Matter possible. This was also to last *for ever*, whereas the other had a determined Duration, and came to a period: and the other did shine out only upon special Occasions, whereas in this we all *with open face as*
- 2 Cor. 3 i8. *in a glass beholding the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory; a period made up of the Phraseology that belonged to the Schechinah: as is also that of his being the*
1. Heb. 3. *Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image, or Character, of his Person; that of the Word which was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld*
- 1 John 14. *his Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten Son of the Father; that of the light of the Glorious Gospel, or rather of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ; and that*  
of

of the light of the knowledge of the *Glo-ry of God in the face or person of Jesus Christ*; all these, with many more that might be quoted, do so plainly allude to the Phraseology of the *Cloud of Glory*, that it is not possible for any who consider things carefully, to avoid the Evidence of it. If it had not been so, what can be said to justify this manner of expression, especially the giving the Translation of the Incommunicable Name that was in the *Old Testament*, in a thread all over the *New*, to our Saviour? This was the laying snares for the first Believers, and that in the most important Point of all Religion; so that since our Saviour denounced a *Wo to him*, by whom *Scandals should come*; the Apostles were the first that incurred it, if they by a continu'd course of Style led the world to believe that a meer man was the great *Jehovah*. If that had occurred only now and then, the extent of the signification of the *Greek* word might be alledged; but it being the Title which they constantly give him, as well as it was that by which the *Jews* understood the *Jehovah* to be meant, this cannot in any sort

Verse 6.

18 Mat. 7.



1 Cor. 8.  
5, 6.

be justified from a gross Abuse put on the World, if the *Messias* was not the true *Jehovah*. The great Objection that arises against this is, that tho *κύριος* is indeed the common Translation for *Jehovah*, yet sometimes it is put for the other *Hebrew* words, both *Elohim* and *Adonai*; and that in the *New Testament* it is used rather in opposition, or more properly in subordination to the name of *God*, which seems to be stated very plainly by *St. Paul*, when he says, *there were many that were called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth, as there were Gods many, and Lords many*; in opposition to all which he asserts, that to Christians there is *but one God the Father, of whom were all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus, by whom were all things, and we by him*: From hence it seems that the true Notion of this, according to *St. Paul* is, That as the Heathen Nations believed some supream Deities, and other deputed or lower Deities, that watch'd over particular Nations; so we Christians do own only one Eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of all; and one Lord, to whom he hath given the Government of all things:

things: So that this, as it favours the Notion of one exalted to divine Authority and Honor, it does likewise take away quite the whole force of this Argument: and so it cannot be well establish'd without considering this very carefully. It is then to be observed, that through the *Old Testament*, God is spoken of under two different Notions; the one is general, as he created and govern'd all things; and the other is special, as he was in Covenant with the Jewish Nation, and as he govern'd them particularly by his Laws, was present among them in a Visible Symbol, and watch'd over them by a distinguishing Providence. In this last sense, *Jehovah* is the Name by which he is strictly express'd, as their Federal God, that had an immediate Care over them, and a Right to them. The Nations that lived in Idolatry, had Notions, which seem to be taken from this: For as they believ'd some supream and some subaltern Deities; so they also fanci'd that some even of those supream Deities, were more especially related or appropriated to some places: Thus as they conceiv'd them to be Supream,

they held them to be Gods; and as they believ'd them to have a special Relation to any Place or Nation, they were esteem'd according to this piece of Jewish Phraseology here us'd by *St. Paul*, *Lords* as well as *Gods*. In opposition to all which, we Christians own but one *Supream God* : and we do also believe, that this great God is also our Federal God, or *Jehovah*, by his dwelling in the Human Nature of *Jesus Christ* : So that he is our *Lord*, not by an assumption into high Dignity, or the communicating divine Honor to him, but as the *Eternal Word* dwelt bodily in him ; and thus he is our *Lord*, not as a Being distinct from, or deputed by the great God, but as the great God manifesting himself in his *Flesh* or *Human Nature* : which is the *great Mystery of Godliness*, or of true Religion : and this will give a clear account of all those other passages of the *New Testament*, in which the *Lord Jesus* is mention'd as distinct from, or subordinate to God and *his Father*. The one is the more extended Notion of God, as the *Maker* and *Preserver* of all things, and the other is the more special Notion, as appropriated to *Christians*, by which  
 God

God is federally their God, Lord, or *Jehovah*. This I think does fully establish this Argument, and takes away the whole force of the Objection against it. But to carry this yet further; The Apostles do not only name him *thus*, in all their Writings, but they do propose him as the proper Object of Adoration, at the same time that they commanded the World to renounce all Idolatry, and to *serve the living God*. <sup>1 Thes. 1.</sup> St. Paul gives this definition of Heathenish <sup>9.</sup> Idolatry, that it was a Worship given to those *who by nature were not Gods*; <sup>4 Gal. 3.</sup> yet he prays to Christ, he prays for *Grace, Mercy and Peace from him* to all the Churches he writes to; he gives him *Glory for ever and ever*; a Phrase expressing the highest Act of Adoration: he *believes in him*, he *serves him*, he gives Blessing in his Name; he says, *That all in Heaven and Earth must con-* <sup>2 Phil. 10.</sup> *fess him, and bow before him*; a Phrase importing Adoration; he says, *the An-* <sup>Heb. 1. 6.</sup> *gels of God worship him*. In other Epistles this is also often mention'd, and in St. John's Visions, all the Hosts above <sup>Rev. 5. 8.</sup> are represented as falling down before him to worship him. Now tho bare Incurvation



Incurvation does not import Divine Worship, but may be made to a Creature; yet Incurvation join'd with Prayers, Acts of Faith and Trust, and Praises, is certainly Divine Worship. Since then our Saviour in his Temptation said to the Devil, that according to the Law *we must worship the Lord our God, and serve him only*; since also the Angel when he reprov'd St. John for falling down before him, bids him *worship God*; then when these things are laid together, and it appears that all the Acts of Adoration by which we worship God, are also ascribed to Christ, and offered up to him, either it must be confess'd, that he is truly God, or that the Christian Religion sets up Idolatry at the same time that it seems to design the pulling it down every where; as if Idolatry had only been to be changed in its object, and to be transferred from all others to the Person of our Saviour.

This point of the worship of Christ is so plainly set forth in the *New Testament*, that the chief Opposers of the Article of his Divinity have asserted it with so much Zeal, that they deny  
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that such as refuse to pay it to him, deserve to be called Christians : and yet there is not any one point that is more fully and frequently condemned through the whole Scriptures, than the worshipping a Creature. It is also a main part of all the Exhortations of the Apostles. Angels were often sent on Divine Deputations, as the Instruments of the *great God*, but yet they were never to be worshipped. Idolatry is an Evil in it self, and is not only the Transgression of a positive precept, it is a transferring of the Honor and Homage due to the Author of our Being, and the Fountain of all our Blessings, and the ascribing these to a Creature; it is a worshipping the *Creature besides the Creator* : And if the same A&ts of Prayer and Thanksgiving in the same words, can be offered up both to the Creature and the Creator, then how can we still think that *God is a jealous God*, and that *he will not give his Glory to another* ? In a word, this is that which seems so sensible, that one does not know what to think of those men's Reasons, who cannot bring themselves to believe any thing concerning the  
divine

Isa. 42. 8.

Divine Nature, which differs from their own Notions, and yet can swallow down so vast an Absurdity, that is more open to the compass of their Understandings, as that the same Acts in which we acknowledge and adore God, should be at the same time offered up to a Creature.

But to urge this a little more closely, it is well known how averse the *Jews* were to all the appearances of Idolatry, in our Saviour's time; their Zeal against the figures of the Roman *Eagles*, set over the Temple-gates by *Herod*, and against the Statue of *Caligula*, besides many other Instances, prove this beyond all question. They were much prejudiced against the Apostles, as well as they had been against our Saviour; and the Apostles do in several passages of their Epistles set down these their prejudices, together with their own Answers to them: They excepted to the abrogating the Mosaic Ordinance, and to their calling in the *Gentiles*, and associating themselves with them: But it does not appear that they did ever charge them with Idolatry; nor do the Apostles in any hint ever offer

offer to vindicate themselves from that Asperſion. Now if Chriſt had been only a Man Deifi'd, advanc'd to Divine Honor, or if he had been ever ſo Noble a part, and even the firſt part of the Creation, and had been now made the Object of the worſhip of the Chriſtians, let any man ſee, if it is conceivable, that the *Jews* who were ſuch implacable Enemies to Chriſtianity, ſhould not have held to this as their main Strength and chief Objection: Since as this was a very popular thing, in which it was eaſy to draw in all their Countrymen; ſo it was the eaſieſt, as well as the moſt important part of their Plea: They might have yielded, that all the Miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles were true, and yet upon this pretence of Idolatry, they had the expreſs words of their Law on their ſide. *If there* Deut. 13.  
*ariſeth among you a Prophet, or a drea-* 1, 2.  
*mer of Dreams, and giveth thee a ſign*  
*or a wonder; and the ſign or the wonder*  
*come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee,*  
*ſaying, Let us go after other gods which*  
*thou haſt not known, and let us ſerve*  
*them: Thou ſhalt not hearken to the words*  
*of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of dreams,*  
*for*



for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your Heart and with all your Soul. This was such an expresse and full Decision of the Case, that he may imagine any thing, that can imagine that they could have past it by, and that they should not have objected it, or that the Apostles, if their Doctrine had been either that of the *Arians*, or of the *Socinians*, should not have either answer'd or prevented the Objection, since they dwell long upon things that were much less important. Several that join'd themselves to Christianity were scandaliz'd, and fell back to the *Jews*; but it does not appear, that any of them ever charged them with Idolatry, or that the *Jews* ever reproach'd them with it; which yet we cannot think they would not have done, if the Christians had offer'd Divine Adoration to a *Creature*, to one that was a meer man newly dignifi'd, or that had been made by God before all his other Works. Here a *Creature* was made a God, and the Christians were guilty of serving other gods, whom their Fathers had not known.

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This cannot be retorted on us, who believe that Christ was God by virtue of the Indwelling of the *Eternal Word* in him. The *Jews* could make no Objection to this, who knew that their Fathers had worshipped the *Cloud of Glory*, because of God's resting upon it: So the adoring the *Messias* upon the supposition of the *Godhead's dwelling Bodily in him*, could bear no debate among <sup>2 Col. 9.</sup> the *Jews*; and since it was singly upon this point, that they could let it pass without raising Objections or Difficulties about it, and since we find in fact, that they did let it pass, and that the Apostles made no Explanations upon it, we have all possible reason to conclude, that it was thus understood of all hands at that time. I think it is not possible to imagine, that this could be otherwise: so that upon these Reasons, we may well and safely determine, that Christ was truly both God and Man; and that the Godhead did as really dwell in his Human Nature, and became united to it, as our Souls dwell in our Bodies, and are united to them.

Having then laid down this Matter, from Authorities that run through the whole

whole *New Testament*, and that return often in every Book of it, I may now upon greater Advantages refer such as will descend to a more particular Enquiry, to all those passages that assert *Christ's having created all things, Angels as well as Men; that he is over all and in all; before all things; in whom all things do subsist; that he is the Lord of Glory, the Great God, and the true God; the Lord Almighty; who was, is, and is to come; who knows all things, and can do whatsoever he will; who is the first and the last, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; who alone hath Immortality; who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; who will raise the dead at the last day, and judge the World; who is God manifested in the Flesh, the great Mystery of Godliness; who is over all God blessed for ever.* These and many more such like passages, but above all, the Beginning of the Gospel of *St. John*, on which I need not insist, since that has been done with such Strength and Clearness of Reason by a much better hand; All these single passages, I say, are so many expresse Proofs of this great Article of our Religion, that

1 Col. 16.

17.

2 Jam. 1.

1 Cor. 2.8.

2 Tit. 13.

1 John 5.

20.

1 Rev. 8.

21. Joh. 17.

3 Phil. 21.

1 Tim. 6.

17, 18.

2 Phil. 6.

5 Joh. 21.

to 29.

6 Joh. 54.

1 Tim. 3.16

9 Rom. 5.

that I am confident, those who have clear'd themselves of that great prejudice against it, to which the first part of this Discourse was directed, cannot read them without feeling that they are wrestling against the full current of the whole *New Testament*, who oppose this.

I know a great deal has been said to take off the force of every one of them; for if a man resolves beforehand not to believe a thing, he may easily bring out matter enough to avoid the most express words that can be invented: yet this I dare positively affirm, that at their rate of answering passages, with which we urge them, it were easy to answer the most express words that we could be capable to contrive, for setting out our Doctrine: to which this is likewise to be added, That it will be very hard to preserve any respect for Writings that are filled with such Intimations of so Important a Doctrine; all which at first view seem to carry a Sense which they judge Monstrous and Impious, and that with much labour and difficulty are wrought to another sense. It will not be easy to think, those men had

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the common degrees of Honesty and Discretion, not to speak of Inspiration, who writ in such a Style, with such Phrases, and in such a continu'd Strain, that ordinary Readers must stumble in every step; and that in a point of such vast Consequence, as whether a meer Creature is *the great and true God*, or not? and that a great deal of Dexterity and Diligence is necessary to give them another sense. I must own, that if I could think so of the Scriptures, I should lose all Esteem for them, and could think no other of the Pen-men of them, but that their great Affection for their Master, had led them to say many things concerning him, that were Excessive and Hyperbolical, and not strictly true. This is literally, and without any aggravation, the sense that I have of this Matter: and the prophane Tribe of *Libertines* go all into this, of laughing down all Mysteries; knowing well, that when they have once gain'd that point, the *New Testament* it self will be laughed down next, in which they are so plainly contain'd: And indeed, the Christian Religion must be the most self-contradicting of all the Religions in  
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the World, since it does so often condemn the worshipping of Creatures, and yet heaps all sorts of Divine Honors on a Creature; and St. *John* must be a most incongruous Writer, who could at the conclusion of his first Epistle, say of Christ Jesus, *This is the true God, and Eternal Life*; and in the very next words add, *Little Children keep your selves from Idols*; when in the very preceding words he had been setting them on to it, if St. *Paul's* definition must hold true, that Idolatry is *a service to those who by nature are not gods*.

It is true, upon this they will recriminate and say, that there being nothing more expressly and frequently contain'd in Scripture, and that indeed arises more plainly out of our *Idea* of God, than that he is *One*, we destroy that by setting up *Three*. This would press hard, if we did affirm *three distinct Beings*; but since that which is *One* in it self, may be *Three* in other respects, it is only a consequence that they infer, but which we deny, That we set up more Gods than one; and no man is to be charg'd with the suppos'd conse-

quences of his Doctrine, when he himself does not own them, but denies them, and thinks he can plainly show that they do not necessarily follow from it. We do plainly perceive in our selves *two*, if not *three* different Principles of Operation, that do not only differ, as Understanding and Will, which are only different modes of thinking, but differ in their Character and way of Operation. All our Cogitations and Reasonings are a sort of Acts, in which we can reflect on the way how we operate; we perceive that we act freely in them, and that we turn our Minds to such Objects and Thoughts as we please. But by another Principle of which we perceive nothing, and can reflect upon no part of it, we live in our Bodies; we animate and actuate them, we receive Sensations from them, and give Motions to them; we live and die, and do not know how all this is done. It seems to be by some Emanation from our Souls, in which we do not feel that we have any liberty, and so we must conclude, that this Principle in us is natural and necessary. In Acts of Memory, Imagination and Discourse,

course, there seems to be a mixture of both Principles, or a third that results out of them: for we feel a freedom in one respect, but as for those Marks that are in our Brain, that set things in our Memory, or furnish us with words, we are necessary Agents, they come in our way, but we do not know how. We cannot call up a Figure of things or words at pleasure. Some disorder in our Mechanism hides or flattens them, which when it goes off, they start up and serve us, but not by any Act of our Understanding or Will: Thus we see that in this single undivided Essence of ours, there are different Principles of Operation, so different as Liberty and Necessity are from one another: I am far from thinking, that this is a proper Explanation or Resemblance of this *Mystery*; yet it may be called in some sort an Illustration of it, since it shews us from our own Composition, that in one Essence there may be such different Principles, which in their proper Character, may be brought to the terms of a Contradiction, of being free and not free. So in the Divine Essence, which is the simplest and perfectest U-



nity, there may be *Three*, that may have a diversity of Operations as well as Oeconomies. By the first, God may be suppos'd to have made and to govern all things : by the second, to have actuated and been most perfectly united to the Humanity of Christ ; and by the third, to have Inspir'd the Pen-men of the Scriptures, and the Workers of Miracles, and still to renew and fortify all good Minds. But tho we cannot explain how they are *Three*, and have a true diversity from one another, so that they are not barely different Names and Modes ; yet we firmly believe that there is but one God, and with this I conclude all that I have intended to say on the *Head of the Divinity of Christ*.

The next Head that I have now before me, is his *Death and Sufferings*. Which I intend to treat in the same general way, in which I consider'd the former. I must first observe, that School-men and the Writers of positive Divinity, have upon this Head laid down a great many Subtilties, in which the Scripture is absolutely silent.

They begin with a Position, that is the Foundation of all their Calculations,  
That

that God cannot freely forgive sin ; that punishing as well as remunerative Justice, are essential to him ; that God being Infinite, every Offence against him has an infinite Guilt, and must be expiated either by Acts of infinite Value, or of infinite Duration ; and that a Person of an infinite Nature, was only capable of Acts of an infinite Value ; that such a one was necessary for expiating sin. But in all this gradation, there is one main defect, That the Scripture sets none of these Speculations before us ; nor is it easie to apprehend, that a right of punishing which is in the Legislator, and a right to a Reward, which passes from him to the person that acquires it, should be equally essential to God. In the one, his Fidelity and Justice are bound, because of the right that accrues to another ; but the other of punishing, seems to be a Right that is vested in himself, which he may either use or not, as he pleases : and if every sin, as being of infinite Guilt, must be expiated by an infinite Act, it will not be easy to make this out, how the Acts of Christ, tho infinite in Value, should stand in a strict Equality with

all the sins of so many men ; every one of which is of infinite guilt. Therefore these being a subtil Contexture of Legal Metaphisicks, of which the Scripture is silent , it best becomes us to take our Notions from the Scriptures themselves. It is true, *Justice* and *Justification* being the terms used upon this Head, in some of the Epistles, that seems to give some Authority to those reckonings which are laid down to make out a Justice in all God's Proceedings. But those who observe the Style of the Scriptures more narrowly, will see that those words import no more but a state of Favour and *Acceptation with God* ; for the *Righteousness of the Law*, was a man's acceptance that had served God in the Mosaical Dispensation ; and the *Righteousness of Faith* was the Acceptation that a man in the Gospel Dispensation had in the sight of God ; so that the frequent use of those words will be found to have no relation to those subtil weighings of Infinities one against another.

But I go next to shew in what Notion, and under what a set of Phrases this matter is stated to us in the *New Testament* ;

*Testament* : It is then to be consider'd, that when the *New Testament* was writ, there was not any one thing that all people understood better, than the Sacrificatory Style, and all the Phrases that belonged to it. The *Jews* were much accusom'd to it, and had a great variety of Sacrifices that they offer'd up to God ; and the *Gentiles* were likewise well acquainted with all the several sorts of Sacrifices, that us'd to be offer'd up among them. And this was not one of the secrets of their Religion, that was kept only among the Priests, and was not to be communicated to the people ; it was known to them all most particularly, for they were to bring and offer those Victims. Therefore it is plain, that no Forms of Speech were then so fully and so generally understood as those which related to Sacrifices. The *Heathens* had their Expiatory and Piacular Sacrifices, by which they did reckon that they transfer'd their sins on the man or beast that was devoted, and that they thereby expiated them ; and those they reckon'd aton'd the offended Deity by their death, which they suffer'd in their'stead ; They also had many Lustrations



ons and ablutions upon their offering their Sacrifices, to import the Atonement that was made by them: and at the making their Covenants, they had Sacrifices with which they propitiated Heaven; and seal'd their Covenant: This practice of expiatory Sacrifices has been indeed both so Ancient and so universally spread, that it is not an unreasonable Conjecture, to think that there was a Tradition in favour of it, convey'd down from *Noah*. We are very sure, that both *Greeks* and *Romans* were at the time that the *New Testament* was written, very full of the Style and Phrases that belong'd to Expiatory Sacrifices. The *Jews* were no less acquainted with them; they had both their Sin and Trespass-Offerings; their great yearly Expiation by the Sacrifice of a Goat; they burnt a Red-Cow in a peculiar manner, and with its Ashes they were purifi'd and sprinkled. They had also their daily Offerings of two Lambs, and their Peace-Offerings, and Free-will-Offerings; and in their Law their Sacrifice was call'd *their Atonement*, by which their sin was forgiven; it was also said to *bear their Iniquity*, which was among them a Phrase importing Guilt.

For

For while a man stood under the guilt of his sin, liable to punishment, he was said to *bear his Iniquity*: Their Sin-Offerings were in their Language call'd simply *their sins*; to which tho our Translators have added the word *Offering*, yet in the *Hebrew* they are call'd *Sin* or *Trespass*, and in the *Greek*, render'd for *Sin*; and in this all the people of that Nation were certainly well instructed, it being by these, that their Consciences were quieted, their Sins pardon'd, and God reconcil'd to them.

So this ground that I lay down is certain, That there was not any one sort of things, which the whole World knew better than all that belong'd to Sacrifices. At the time of writing the *New Testament* they certainly were more accustomed to it, and understood it much better than we generally do now, in Ages in which those practices have so long ceas'd, that the Memory of them is quite extinguish'd. It is indeed very probable, that many particular Phrases belonging to them, might have been by a Poetical Liberty, extended to other Matters: for things of the sacredst nature are by Poets and Orators made use of

of to give the liveliest Illustrations, and raise the strongest passions possible: yet after all, an entire Thread of a sacrificial Style, was a Form of description, that the World must have known could belong only to an Expiatory Sacrifice, that is, to some person or thing that was devoted to God by a Sinner in his own stead, and upon the account of his sin and guilt was to be some way destroy'd, in sign of what he own'd he had deserv'd; and this was to be done in order to the reconciling the guilty Person to God, the *Guilt* being transfer'd from the *Person* to the *Sacrifice*; and God by accepting the Sacrifice, was reconcil'd to the person, whose sin was upon that account forgiven. This being thus laid down, let us look next to the whole strain of the *New Testament* particularly to those parts of it in which this matter is more fully treated about.

Here I will again follow the method that I took upon the former Head, and not enter so particularly upon the Criticisms of some passages, but will view the thing in gross, that seeming to be both the most convincing way in it self, and

and the best suited to my present purpose. I must further observe, that this was a point of vast Consequence, as being that which concern'd men's Peace with God, the pardon of their sins, and their hopes of God's Favour, and of Eternal Happiness. Therefore we ought not to imagine, that Rhetorick or Poetical Forms of Speech could be admitted here, to the aggravating of so solemn a piece of our Religion beyond its true value ; so that we must conclude, that here, if in any thing, the Apostles writ strictly, besides that their manner of writing is always plain and simple. When then they set forth the Death of Christ with all the Pomp of the sacrificatory Phrases, we must either believe it to be a true Propitiatory Sacrifice, or otherwise we must look upon them as warm indiscreet men, whose Affections to our Saviour heated them so far, as to carry them in this Matter out of all measure far beyond the truth:

Those who oppose this Article, believe that Christ only died for our good, but not in our stead ; that by his Death he might fully confirm his Gospel, and give it a great Authority, that so it might  
have



have the more Influence upon us: they also believe, that by his dying, he intended to set us a most perfect pattern of bearing the sharpest Sufferings, with the perfectest Patience and Submission to the Will of God, and the most entire Charity to those at whose hands we suffer; and that by doing this, he was to Merit at God's hands that supreme Authority, with which he is now vested for our good, that so he might obtain a Power to offer the World the pardon of sin upon their true Repentance; and finally, That he died in order to his Resurrection, and for giving a sensible Proof of that main Article of his Religion, That we shall all be raised up at the last day; therefore he was to die, and that in such a manner, that no man might question the truth of it, that so his Resurrection might give a most demonstrative Proof both of the possibility of it, and of our being to be raised up by him, who was thus declared to be the Son of God, by his Rising from the dead.

On the other hand, we believe that God intending to pardon sin, and to call the World by the offers of it to Repentance,

Repentance, design'd to do it in such a manner, as should both give us the highest Ideas of the guilt of sin, and also of his own Love and Goodness to us, which he thus order'd: That after that Divine Person in whom dwelt the *Eternal Word*, had sufficiently opened his Doctrine, and had set a perfect pattern of Holiness to the world, he was to be fallen on by a company of perfidious and cruel men, who after they had loaded him with all the spiteful and reproachful Usage that they could invent, they in conclusion Crucified him; he all the while bearing, besides those visible Sufferings in his Person, most inexpressible Agonies in his Mind, both before and during these his Sufferings; and yet bearing them with a most absolute Submission to his Father's Will, and a perfect Charity to those his Persecutors; and that in all this, he willingly offer'd himself to suffer both upon our account, and in our stead, which was so accepted of God, that he not only raised him from the dead, and exalted him up on high, giving to him even as he was Man, all power both in Heaven and Earth, but that upon the account of it, he offer'd to the World the pardon of sins, together with all those other Blessings,

sings which accompany it in his Gospel, and that he will have us in all our Prayers for pardon, or other favours, claim them through that Death, and owe them to it.

These are the two contrary Doctrines upon this Head. Now let us see which of them comes nearest the Manner and Style in which the Scriptures set it out in the *New Testament*. Christ is said to have reconcil'd us to his Father; to be our Propitiation, to have born our sins, and to have been bruise'd for our Iniquities; to have been made sin for us; to have been accursed for us; to have given himself for our sins; that he might redeem us from all Iniquity; he is said to have died for, or in the stead of our sins; to have given his life a ransom for us, or in lieu of us; he is said to have born our sins on his own body; he has appointed a perpetual Remembrance of his Death in these words, *That his body was broken for us; and that his blood was shed for many for the Remission of sins; Remission of sins is offered in his name, and through his blood, God laid upon him the iniquities of us all; he was our justification, our peace and our redemption; He is called the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins*

1 Joh. 2. 2.

1 Pet. 2. 24

1 Cor. 15.

3.

2 Cor. 5.

21.

1 Gal. 4.

3 Gal. 13.

2 Tit 14.

20 Mat. 28.

3 Rom.

25.

4 Rom.

25.

5 Rom. 6.

10, 11. and

to the end.

1 Cor. 1.

30.

1 Eph. 7.

1 Col. 14.

20, 21.

1 Joh. 29.

*sins of the world.* His Death and Intercession are very copiously compared to the Expiation made on the solemn day of the Atonement for the whole Nation of the Jews, on which after the Sacrifice was offer'd on the Altar, the High Priest carri'd in the Blood to the Holy of Holies, and set it down before the Cloud of Glory, as that which reconcil'd that people to God. This is done in so full a Discourse, and with such a Variety of Expressions, that it is not easy to imagine, how any thing could be more plainly told. He is call'd *the High-Priest* 9. Heb. 11, that was consecrated to offer up Sacrifices 12, 13, 14. for the people; it is said, *That he has* 8. 26. 28. *entred into the Holy Place by his own Blood,* 10. Heb. *having obtain'd Eternal Redemption for us.* 10 12, 14. *His Blood purges our Consciences from dead* 19. *works, to serve the living God; he hath put away sin by the Sacrifice of himself, and was once offer'd to bear the sins of many; we are Sanctifi'd by the offering of the Body of Christ once for us all; and after he had offer'd one Sacrifice for sins, he for ever sate down on the right hand of God, having by that one Offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified: so that we enter into the holiest by the Blood*

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of



13. Heb.  
12. 20.

of *Jesus* : He is also compared to the Sacrifice that was burnt without the Camp ; and that he might *Sanctify the people with his own Blood*, he suffer'd without the Gate ; and he is call'd that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting Covenant.

Now let it be consider'd, That as this Argument is in some places closely pursu'd in many chosen and strict Expressions, so it returns in a great variety of Phrases through the whole Epistles ; in so many different places, and on so many several occasions, that nothing can appear plainer in words, than that the Apostles consider'd this as the Capital Article of their whole Doctrine, and the Main Point given them in Commission. In their preaching to all Nations they inculcate it chiefly, they repeat it often, and for ought I have been able to judge, they have not left one single Phrase that belong'd to Sacrifices in the *Old Testament*, which they have not appli'd to the Death of *Christ* in the *New*. It is true, they mention his Resurrection often, as the Great and Eminent Proof of *Christ's* being the *Messias* ; but they never apply that with those lively and inflam'd Expressions

Expressions to men's Consciences, that they do his Death and Sufferings. The Merit is plainly put *there*; the Resurrection being the Glorious Reward and Consequence of it. Upon his *Death* and *Cross* it is that they dwell the most; they set an infinite Value upon his Loving us, and dying for us: Now if he had only di'd for our good, tho it is not to be deni'd, but that this was a great Evidence of perfect Love; yet the world was full of Stories of men that had di'd for their Country; so that barely the dying for our good, if it had not been likewise *in our stead*, could not have born such a sublime Strain as that is in which they set this out.

If our Saviour had only been to endure those bodily Torments, how violent soever, it does not give any extraordinary Character of him, that the very night before, he was so *exceedingly amaz'd* at the prospect of what he was entring upon, that he became *sorrowful even to the death*; and was in such a bodily Agony, that his *Sweat fell down as great drops of Blood*; which shews that his Mind was then in a much more unconceivable and unsupportable Agony; so

22. Luke.

44.

26. Mat.

36, 37, 38.

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that

that an Angel was sent from Heaven to comfort him. Now if there was no more in his Sufferings than that which we see, here is a depression far below what great Heroes have express'd even during the most extream Sufferings; and yet this was at a distance from them, only upon the prospect of their coming on. All the while before, our Saviour knew they were coming, and yet till then, no Agony is heard of; which intimates, that there was somewhat peculiar in it, which some Churches have in their Liturgies call'd very properly *his unspeakable and unutterable Sufferings*. They are so indeed; for we who have only a Notion of vast Agonies in the Mind, when Rack'd with the Horror of guilt, it cannot bear the apprehensions of the Wrath of God, and the reproaches that arise from a wounded Conscience; cannot apprehend what could have rais'd such amazing Sorrows in so pure and unspotted a Soul, that was conscious to it self of no sin, and so could fear nothing from a just and good God: therefore we must not pretend to explain what we cannot understand.

But

But to return to the main Argument: When this whole Collection of the ways in which the Death of Christ is propos'd to the World in the *New Testament*, is laid together, we must conclude, that either this Death was a propitiatory Sacrifice, or we must for ever despair of finding out the meaning of any thing that can be express'd in words: Nothing could be plainer said, nor oftner repeated in a greater variety of Expressions, proper to signify this, and not proper for any thing else. I do not deny, but those who would turn all this another way, have found to every one of these passages somewhat that seems to favour the diverting them to another signification; but as it was observ'd before, if some of the Sacrificatory Phrases have by some Authors, and upon some occasions been brought down to a signification less important, it will not from thence follow, that Discourses that are a contexture of those Notions and Forms of Speech, should be so wrested from their natural Signification, to a sense so far below the genuine and receiv'd Importance of the words. And indeed I do not see what we can make of any part of the



*New Testament*, or how much of it we can receive with any degrees of Esteem, if we do not believe the Death of Christ to have been a truly Expiatory Sacrifice offer'd up to God in our stead.

Nor does this at all contradict the freedom of the Grace of God in pardoning sin, which is so much set forth in Scripture, since there is matter enough for Free-Grace to exert it self, notwithstanding the Atonement made by Sacrifice. For God might have, in the strictness of Justice, demanded satisfaction from our selves; so his commuting the matter, and accepting of it in the person of another, is a very high Act of his Grace; then our Saviour's offering himself up so freely for us, was a signal as well as an undeserv'd Act of Love, in that he *died for us while we were yet Enemies*: and tho this Act belong'd to his Human Nature, yet the Union between it and the *Eternal Word* that dwelt in him, may very well entitle God to it, so that in that respect this also may be call'd an Act of God's Grace. The offering this to us on such easy terms, and the exacting only a sincere obedience as the condition of it, without insisting

insisting on an entire Obedience, is another part of the Grace of it: and finally, The proposing such vast Rewards to our poor services, and the conveying the knowledge of this to some Nations, when others are left in Darkness and Ignorance, are very great and undeserved Acts of Love and Mercy: so that the sense of our Saviour's dying for us as our Sacrifice, does not at all derogate from, or lessen our acknowledgments of the Love and Goodness of God.

Nor are those Objections of more value that are taken from the shortness of the continuance of Christ's Sufferings, since besides what is commonly urg'd to this purpose from the infinite Dignity of the person, we are to consider, that in Sacrifices it is the Appointment and the Acceptation that makes the satisfaction; for God's accepting a Sacrifice, is an abatement of the Rigour of Justice, and a declaring that he will pardon sins in such a Method and upon such a Consideration; and there appear very good Reasons, even to us, for the method that God thought fit to take, in this great Transaction. He intended to call the World to Repentance and Reformation:

matien: Now it had been a vain attempt to have persuaded men to repent, without an offer of pardon; for if men are made desperate, there is no great hope of prevailing on them; so an offer of pardon was necessarily to be made; yet this was to be made in such a way, as to have the greatest effect possible on men. If the offer of pardon had been made upon too slight a consideration, the World might have been tempted to have had slight thoughts of sin, as a thing of no such black nature, since it was so easily forgiven: and therefore to heighten the sense of the odiousness of sin, God would pardon it in such a manner, as should show how much he hated it, at the same time that he shew'd such Love and Compassion to sinners. Since then the great Design of this whole Oeconomy was to reform the World, we see in every step of it a tendency to that; a pardon was offer'd to give men hopes, but the consideration of it was so amazing, as to encrease their Horrour at sin, and their strict watchfulness against that, which was so hard and stood so dear to expiate.

Further,

Further, The rule of life that was proposed, was so exactly pure and holy, that it well became a God of Infinite Purity to impose it on us, since it has in all its parts such a tendency to the making us perfect, even as our Heavenly Father is perfect. It begins at the cleansing our hearts, and from thence it goes the whole round of our lives, in all our Actions, Circumstances and Relations: It neither dispences with an idle word, a lewd look, nor a defiling thought; but is a Law of life and love, that will sanctify every individual Nature, and settle every Society that comes under its conduct. But that, as the holiness of this Rule is no small honour to the Religion of which it is so main a part; so that the strictness of it might not frighten men from embracing it, tho there is no slackning of the obligation of the Law, but that every offence against any part is a sin; yet there is an abatement made, as it is a Condition of Salvation: And thus it is not an entire, but a sincere obedience that is made the Condition upon which we are admitted to the Gospel-Covenant.



nant. Every sin gives a wound, and requires repentance to wash and heal it; but every sin does not shut us out from a right to the blessings of this Covenant: So that here is a main distinction never to be forgotten. We are under the whole Gospel, as it is a law and rule of life; and every time that we break any part of it, we ought to be humbled for it before God; but nothing that does not defile our hearts, and make us go off from the sincerity of our Obedience, breaks our Relation to Christ, and dissolves our being in a state of Grace and Salvation.

It may seem a diminution of the Purity of our Religion, that an entire holiness is not made the Indispensable Condition, as well as the Absolute Duty of Christians; since God might have furnished us with such degrees of Grace, as might have conquered every Corrupt Inclination: Besides, that this Doctrine of the Unattainableness of Perfection, and Invincible Infirmary, does furnish Bad men and cold Christians with many Pretences to hide or excuse their Faults, and makes the greater part sit down contented with very low

low degrees, in which they quiet themselves with this seeming Defectiveness of the New Covenant. But it is certain, that every man who deals honestly and impartially by himself, does perceive that he might be much better than he truly is; and that God's assistances are not wanting to him, but that he is wanting to them: Every man feels that it is by the vicious use of his own Liberty, and not by reason of any Impotency that is in his Nature, that he falls in sin: And the eminent strictness and victory over Sin, that some men arrive at, who shine as Lights in the World, serves to let the rest see what they might come to, if it were not for their own fault: So that God's accepting a sincere Obedience, instead of an entire one, is no encouragement to Sin; but is a condescension to Humane Infirmary: And it seems that God does, while he continues us here on Earth, suffer our Natures still to hang so heavy about us, and sometimes to prevail so fatally over us, that we may be thereby obliged to live in a more constant distrust of our selves, and a more humble

ble dependance on him ; to make us feel the necessity of applying our selves often to him for pardon, and assistance, and also to beget in us more tender Compassions for the Frailties of others, which we can more easily bear with, and forgive, when we reflect on our selves, and what we are capable of. This gives a more melting Charity than could flow from a severer Vertue, that had never felt the weight of Nature, nor the strength of Temptations: If this is abused by some who turn the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, it is a very ungrateful return to God for his Mercy, and a signal abuse of his Goodness. *But if this gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*

There remains yet one Article to be well stated, relating to this matter, and that is, to give the true notion of *Justification*, of which there seem to be two such different accounts given by *St. Paul* and *St. James*, that this has led men into a great many Subtilties. I shall first open this matter, as it is spoke of by these two Apostles: The Design of *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, was to oppose that Conceit of the

the *Jews*, who thought it impossible to be in the favour of God without observing the *Mosaical Rites*. This he beats down, by leading them up to their Father *Abraham*, and shewing them how he came into a state of favour with God, before he had received the Covenant of Circumcision; and that his believing in God, was accepted of God, and reckoned to him, or *imputed to him for righteousness*; or in order to his being in the favour of God. The Inference that he naturally drew from this, was, that he was *justified without the works of the law*: And by the tenor of the whole Discourse, it is plain, That by the *works of the law*, are meant the *Mosaical Precepts*, and not the Works of *Moral Vertue*. For St. Paul had divided Mankind into those who were *in*, or *under the law*, and those who were *without law*; that is, into *Jew* and *Gentile*. The design of the Epistle was not to give us Metaphysical Abstractions and Distinctions between *Faith*, as it is a special Grace, and *Works* or Obedience to the Laws of God; but by *Faith* he means the entire receiving of the whole Gospel in its

4. Rom. 3.

2. Rom. 12.



3. Rom.  
28.

its Commands, as well as Promises; for so he reckons *Abraham's* readiness to offer up his Son *Isaac*, as an act of his *faith*; so that *faith* stands for the complex of all the Duties of Christianity; and therefore his Assertion of our being *justified by faith without the works of the law*, signifies no more, than that those who received the Gospel, who believed it, and lived according to it, were put in the favour of God by it, without being brought under the obligation of the *Mosaical* Precepts.

5. Gal. 6.

The same Argument is handled by him upon the same grounds in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, only there he gives a more explicate notion of that *faith* which justified, that it was a *faith that wrought by love*; so that in all *St. Paul's* Epistles, he understands by *faith* the compleat receiving the Gospel in all its parts. But whether these Expressions were any of those that *St. Peter* says, the *unstable wrested to their own perdition*, or not, we see plainly by *St. James's* Epistle, that some began to set up the Notion of a bare believing the Gospel, as that which justified; as if

if the meer Profession of Christianity, or the persuasion of its truth, without a suitable Conversation, justified. For St. James speaks not of the *works of the law*, but of *works* simply; and as he had just reason to condemn a Doctrine that tended to the total corruption of our Faith; so he plainly shews, that he did not differ from St. Paul, since he takes his chief Instance from Abraham's Faith, which made him offer up his Son Isaac upon the Altar, by which he was justified; so that *faith wrought in his works, and by works faith was made perfect*: And he concludes all, *That as the body without the spirit was dead, so faith without works was dead also*: From whence it is plain, that *faith* in St. James, stands strictly for a believing the Truth of the Christian Religion, and not for an entire receiving the Gospel, which was the *faith* that Saint Paul had treated of. These things will appear so clear to any one who will attentively read and consider the scope of St. Paul's Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, and the Discourse in St. James's Epistle, that I am confident no scruple can remain in men, that

that are not possessed with prejudices, or over-run with a nice sort of Metaphysics, that some have brought into these matters; by which they have, instead of clearing them, rendred them very intricate and unintelligible: Their stating the instrumentality of faith in Justification; their distinguishing it from Obedience in this, but joining it with it in Sanctification, are niceties, not only without any ground in Scripture, but really very hurtful, by the disquiet they may give good minds: For if the Christian Doctrine is plain in any one thing, it must be in this, which is the foundation of our quiet, and of our hope. It would make a long Article to reckon up all the different Subtilties with which this matter has been perplexed: As whether Justification is an imminent or a transient Act; whether it is a Sentence pronounced in Heaven, or in the Conscience; or whether it is only a Relation, and what constitutes it; what is the efficient, the instrument, and the condition of it; these, with much more of the like nature, filled many Books some years ago.

The

The strict sense of *Justification*, as it is a legal term, and opposite to *Condemnation*, is the absolution of a Sinner; which is not to be solemnly done till the final Sentence is pronounced after death, or at the day of Judgment; But as men come to be in the state to which those Sentences do belong, they in a freer form of speech are said to be *justified* or *condemned*. And as they *who do not believe*, are under condemnation, and said to be *condemned already*; that is, <sup>3.Joh.18.</sup> they are liable to that Sentence, and under those Characters that belong to it, blindness, obduration of heart, and the Wrath and Judgments of God: So such Believers, to whom the Promises of the Gospel belong, and on whom the final Sentence shall be pronounced, justifying them, are said now to be *justified*, since they are now in the state to which that belongs: They have the Characters of it upon them, Faith, Repentance, and renovation of heart and life, by which they come to be in the favour, and under the protection of God.



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The Gospel is of the nature of a publick Amnesty, in which a Pardon is offered to all Rebels, who return to their duty, and live peaceably in obedience to the Law; and a day is prefixed to examine who has come in upon it, and who has stood out; upon which final Acts of Grace or Severity are to pass. It is then plain, that though every man is pardoned in the strictness of Law only by the final Sentence, yet he is really in the construction of Law pardoned upon his coming within the Terms on which it is offered; and thus men are justified, who do truly repent of, and forsake their sins, who do sincerely believe not only the truth of the Gospel in general, but do so firmly believe every part of it, that acts proportioned to that belief, arise out of it; when they depend so much on the Promises, that they venture all things in hopes of them; and do so receive the Rules and Laws given in it, that they set themselves on obeying them in the course of their whole life; and in a most particular manner, when they lay claim to the Death of Christ, as their  
Sa-

Sacrifice, and the means of their Reconciliation; with such a Repentance as changes their inward Natures and Principles, and such a Faith as purifies their hearts, and makes them become new Creatures.

These are the Conditions of this Covenant; and they are such Conditions, that upon lower than these it became not the Infinite Purity and Holiness of God to offer us pardon, or to receive us into his favour: For without these, the Mercies and Favours of the Gospel had been but the opening a Sanctuary to Criminals, and the giving encouragement to Sin, if a few howlings to God for mercy, and the earnest imploring it, for the sake of Christ, and on the account of his Death, would serve turn. This every man, under the least agony of thought, will be apt to do, especially when death seems to be near him, and yet be still in all respects as bad as ever; this is indeed so slight a thing, that a greater disparagement cannot be offered to our Religion; nor can a greater strengthening of sin be contrived, than the giving any sort of encouragement



to it; for it is one of the greatest, and the most mischievous of all those practical Errors which have corrupted Religion.

These are the most important parts of our whole Commission; and therefore we ought to state them first aright in our own thoughts, that so we our selves may be fully possessed with them, that they may sink deep into our own minds, and shew their efficacy in the reforming our Natures and Lives, and then we shall be able to open them to others with more clearness, and with better advantages, when our hearts are inflamed with an overcoming sense of the Love and Goodness of God. If the Conditions of this New Covenant, were deeply impressed on our thoughts, then we should publish them with more life and joy to others; and we might then look for the *fulness of the blessing of the Gospel* on our selves, and on our labours.

## DISCOURSE III.

Concerning the

## INFALLIBILITY

AND

## AUTHORITY of the CHURCH.

**A**FTER we are well settled in the Belief of the Christian Religion; our next enquiry must naturally be into the Way and Method of being rightly Instructed in the Doctrine and other parts of this Religion; and that chiefly in one great Point, Whether we ought to employ our own Faculties in searching into this, and particularly into the meaning of those Books in which it is contain'd: or, Whether we must take it from Oral Tradition, and submit to any man, or body of men, as the

Infallible Depositaries and Declarers of this Tradition.

In this single point consists the Essence of the differences between us and the Church of *Rome*: While we affirm that the Christian Doctrine is compleatly contain'd in the Scriptures, and that every man ought to examine these with the best helps and all the skill and application of which he is capable; and that he is bound to believe such Doctrines only, as appear to him to be contain'd in the Scriptures; but may reject all others that are not founded upon that Authority. On the other hand, The foundation upon which the Church of *Rome* builds, is this, ' That the Apostles deliver'd their Doctrine by word of mouth, to the several Churches as the Sacred *Depositum* of the Faith: That the Books of the *New Testament* were written occasionally, not with intent that they should be the Standard of this Religion; that we have these Books, and believe them to be Divine, only from the Church, and upon her Testimony; that the Church, with the Books, gives us likewise the Sense and Exposition of

of them, they being dark in many  
 places; and that therefore the Tradi-  
 tional Conveyance, and the Solemn  
 Decisions of the Church must be In-  
 fallible, and ought to be submitted to  
 as such, otherwise there can be no end  
 of Controversies, while every man  
 takes upon him to expound the Scrip-  
 tures, which must needs fill mens  
 Minds with Curiosity and Pride, as  
 well as the World with Heresies and  
 Sects, that are unavoidable, unless  
 there is a living speaking Judge: this  
 they also prove from some places of  
 Scripture, such as Christ's words to  
 St. Peter, *Upon this Rock will I build* 16. Mat.  
*my Church, and the gates of hell shall* 18, 19.  
*not prevail against it; and unto thee*  
*will I give the keys of the Kingdom*  
*of Heaven. Tell the Church: I am with* 18. Mat. 20.  
*with you alway, even to the end of the* 28. Mat.  
*World: the Spirit shall lead you into* 20.  
*all Truth; and the Church is the Pillar* 16. Joh. 13.  
*and Ground of Truth. This, is their* 1 Tim. 3.  
*Doctrine, and these are their chief* 16.  
*Arguments upon which it is found-*  
*ed.*

There is no point in Divinity that  
 we should more clearly understand than



this; for it is in it self of great Consequence, and is that which determines all the rest; if it is true, it puts an end to all other Controversies; and if it is false, it leaves us at liberty to examine every thing, and gives us the justest and highest prejudices possible against that Church, that pretends to it without just grounds. It is also that which of all others the Missionaries of that Church understand the best, and manage the most dextrously; they are much practised to it, and they begin and end all their practises with this, which has fair appearances, and will bear a great deal both of popular Eloquence and plausible Logick: so if men are not on the other hand as well fortifi'd, and as ready on the other side of the Argument, they will be much entangled as often as they have occasion to deal with any of that Church. There is not indeed any one point that I know of, that has been open'd and examin'd both with that Beauty and Force that is in *Chillingworth's* Unvaluable Book upon this Subject. Few things of this nature have ever been handled so near a Mathematical Evidence as he has pursu'd this

this Argument, and his Book is writ with such a thread of Wit and Reason, that I am confident few can enter upon it without going through with it. I shall now endeavour in as narrow a compass as is possible to set this matter in its true Light.

We must then begin with this, That the freedom of a man's Thoughts and Understanding is the most Essential Piece of his *Liberty*, and that in which naturally he can the least bear to be limited: therefore any Restraints that are laid upon him in this, must be well and fully proved: otherwise it is to be suppos'd, that God could never intend to bring us under the yoke in so sensible and so valuable a thing, without giving clear and evident warrants for it: And as every Invasion on the Liberties of the Human nature ought to be well made out; so every Privilege which any person claims against the common fate of Mankind, ought to be also fully proved, before others can be bound to submit to it: We perceive in our selves, and we see in all others such a feebleness of understanding, such an easiness to go too quick, and judge too fast; and such a  
narrow

narrow compass of knowledge, that as we see all Mankind is apt to mistake things, so we have no reason to believe, that any one is exempted from this, but as there are evident Authorities to prove it. Since then this is a Privilege in those that have it, as well as an Imposition on those that have it not, it ought not to be offer'd at or obtruded on the world without a full Proof. Probabilities, forced Inferences, or even disputable Proofs, ought not to be made use of here, since we have reason to conclude, that if God had intended to put any such thing upon us, he would have done it in so plain and uncontested a way, that there should have been no room to have doubted of it.

Besides, all such things as do naturally give jealousy, and offer specious grounds of mistrust, ought to be very clear. Since then, all Companies of men that lodge themselves in any Authority, and more particularly those who manage mens Consciences, and the Concerns of Religion, have been too often observ'd to enlarge their powers, and to make the most of them they could; and that by their means, Religion has been often and  
much

much corrupted, the World has from hence a Right to exact very full proofs before they can be bound to believe any such body of men to be exempted from Error. This will yet appear the more evident, if that very Body in which this Infallibility is suppos'd to dwell, has manifestly corrupted the Morals, and the order or discipline of this Religion; if they have fill'd the world with Fables, if they have fallen under gross Ignorance, and have been over-run with Vice and Disorder; these must afford great occasion of suspecting them in all other things. If Impostures have been set up and promoted with great Zeal in some Ages, which have in other Ages of more Light and Knowledge been thrown out and disclaim'd; and if we find that the same Methods of Craft and Violence which have been practis'd in all other Societies, have been more notoriously and scandalously practis'd by the men of Infallibility, then we have from all these things just prejudices given us against this pretension. Now a just prejudice amounts to this, That we have no reason to believe a thing, unless we see very good grounds  
to



to believe it; and it gives us all reason to suspect those grounds, and to examine them well, before we are concluded by them.

Further, This being so great a Matter, and that which must settle all other things, we have just reason to believe, That if God has left such Authorities in the World, that he has also made it plain where they lye, and with whom they are to be found; for it is not imaginable that God should have concluded Mankind under such an Authority, and yet not have explain'd so necessary a Point, as Who are the Depositories of it; but to have left men to their shifts to find that out, the best they can: since till this is clear'd, the other is of no use. There is a dormant Infallibility, they say, in the Church, but nobody knows where; for it is no Article of Faith in whom it is vested. We are where we were, only with this disadvantage, that if we think we are sure there is an Infallibility in the Church, but are not sure to whom it is trusted, we may be resisting this Infallibility by opposing those who indeed have it, while we adress our selves for it to others who have

have it not, tho we fancy it belongs to them.

In all Constitutions among men, the most evident thing is this, Where rests the Supreme Authority of that Constitution? And if this is necessary for the order and policy of the World, it is much more necessary, that if God has devolv'd so main a part of his own Authority, and indeed the dispensing of one of his own Attributes, this should be so described and circumstantiated, that there should be no danger of mistaking: and that there should have been such Characters given, by which all the World should have been as infallibly directed to this Authority, as it was to be infallible in its Decisions. When God consign'd such a Character to the Jewish Nation, that the Symbol of his presence was to appear, and that Answers were to be given out as he was consulted, it was expressly declar'd with whom it was lodged, and in what Method the High-Priest was to appear before the Lord, with the *Urim* in the Breast-plate; that so there might be no room left for Imposture or even for suspicion.

Upon

*Concerning the Infallibility*

Upon all these reasons, we have a very just right to demand of those who call us to submit to their Infallibility, to give us such plain, express and determinate proofs for it, as are proportion'd to the Importance and Unusualness of that which they impose upon us. It is a vain thing to prove that this must be in the Church, because otherwise a great many Absurdities must needs follow, if it were not in it. When it is once prov'd that God has given it to his Church, we shall very willingly yield, that he had very good reasons for it; since so extraordinary a Power, which might be easily imploy'd to very bad purposes, certainly was not to be given but for very good ones; but it is a very preposterous way to argue, That God must have done such a thing, because we fancy that it is necessary to prevent some great Evil, or to procure some very great Good. For this is only to pretend to prove, that God ought to have done somewhat that he has not done; unless they can at the same time prove, that God has done it: this is to conclude, *That his Ways must be as ours are, and that his Thoughts must be as our Thoughts.*  
We

We may at this rate prove as well, that the *Messias* should have appear'd much sooner than he did; have shew'd his Miracles, and even his Body after his Resurrection more publickly than he did: This will prove that the Gospel should have been preach'd to many Nations yet in Paganism, and this will, rather with an advantage in the Argument prove, that there should be no sin left in the world, and that no man should be left to perish in his sins, and so be damn'd for them. It will require no great Art to make it appear, that these are much more dreadful things, and seem to be much more contrary to God's Nature, to his Love to Mankind, and to his Church: but indeed if we will give our selves scope upon this Argument, to fancy that God must do every thing, which we imagine would be very convenient, we should soon frame an *Idea* both of his Creation and his Providence, that is wholly different from what we perceive it to be.

We are not capable of so vast a Thought as to take in a Scheme of those great Designs, that lye in the Eternal Mind, and that are scatter'd in  
a seem-



a seeming Confusion through his Works and Ways ; but are beautiful and orderly as they are gathered together in his *Ideas*. We cannot say what is good or evil with relation to the whole ; nor what are the properest Methods of bringing about the one, or of diverting the other : so, to conclude, the arguing that Christ had dealt ill with his Church, if he had not made her Infallible, unless it is made out that he has done it, is only a reproaching him with this, that he has not done that which he ought to have done ; and that he has not been faithful in discharging the Trust committed to him of his Father. Therefore all these are false ways of arguing, which cannot work on any, but such as measure God by themselves. The Argument if true, is Infinite, and has no bounds.

It does seem to agree much better with the Jewish Oeconomy, that an Infallibility should have been lodg'd among them. Their Law being Typical, it was much more reasonable to have expected an Oral Tradition of its signification. Their Prophets express'd themselves in a very dark and figurative way, full of strange

strange Allusions, and lofty Phrases; and since these were to lead them to the *Messias*, and yet seem capable of very different Senses, all this required an Infallible Expounder. They were one Nation, so that Unity was in many respects most necessary to their Preservation; they were for many Ages strongly set on Idolatry; so that a solemn, publick, and infallible Authority was the more necessary. There were also provisions in their Law; much more express than any can be pretended in the *New Testament*, requiring them *when they had any Controversies within their Gates*, to come up to the Temple to the Priest that stood there, to minister before the Lord, as well as to the Judge; and they were upon pain of death to submit to their Determinations. This matter is set out in such a variety of large and positive Expressions, that tho perhaps that passage belongs to their *Law Sutes*, (But by the way, that of *tell the Church* seems to be limited to the same sort of matters) yet if a parity of Reason, or if the Letter of the Law is consider'd, this will go much further towards an absolute Submission, which seems to suppose an Infallible Authority;

17. Deut.  
8, 9, 10, 11,  
12, 13.

2. Mal. 7. rity, [than any thing that can be al-  
 ledged for the like out of the *New*  
*Testament*; not to mention other Ex-  
 pressions of *asking the Law at the Priest's*  
*mouth, and that his Lips should preserve*  
*knowledge, for he was the Minister of the*  
*Lord of Hosts*: These things, I say, seem  
 to make out a very fair Title to Infallibili-  
 ty, under the Mosaical Dispensation; and  
 they continu'd to be not only the *True*,  
 but indeed the *Only Church* that God  
 had on Earth, till the Dispensation  
 of the Gospel was opened: They had  
 still among them the Federal Means of  
 Salvation, which is all that is neces-  
 sary to the Being of a *Church*. Our  
 Saviour join'd both in Temple and Syna-  
 gogue-Worship, which alone is enough to  
 prove them to have been a true Church.

In this we plainly see the Sophistry  
 of one Argument, which perhaps makes  
 some Impression on weak minds, That  
 a *True Church* must be *true* in its Do-  
 ctrine: it must indeed have those things  
 that are necessary to keep up its Fede-  
 ral Relation to God; so the *Jews* had  
 their Circumcision and Sacrifices, toge-  
 ther with the rest of the Temple-Ser-  
 vice: But yet that Church had fallen  
 under

under two great Errors, that had a vast Extent as well as a very fatal Consequence. They understood all the Prophecies of the *Messias* in a literal sense, of a Temporal Prince, and a Glorious Conqueror. Here Oral Tradition fail'd, in that which of all other things was the most important for them to understand aright; since their mistakes in this, occasion'd their rejecting the *True Messias*, which drew on their final Ruin. The other Error was also very fatal; for it brought them under a vast Corruption of their Morals. They thought the ritual part of their Religion was of such high Value in the sight of God, that this alone, together with many invented Rites that had been handed down to them by *Tradition*, were of such Value in the sight of God, that they did compensate for the grossest Immoralities, and excuse from the most important Obligations of the Moral Law. These things had pass'd down among them by Tradition from their Fathers, and had corrupted all their Notions about Religion: so that here we see all the arguings from a seeming necessity of things for an Infallible Authority, are only vain



Imaginations; which do not hold in Instances, in which we have all the plausible Reasons of looking for them.

Nor does it appear, that it is any greater Imputation on the Goodness of God, that he has not provided an Infallible Remedy against *Error*, than that he has not provided an Infallible Remedy against *Sin*. *Sin* is that which of its own own nature bears the greatest opposition to the Attributes of God, and to his Dominion, and that does defile and corrupt our Souls the most. We can much more easily apprehend, that God can bear with a man that lives in *Error*, than with one that lives in *Sin*: The one can consist with good Intentions and a Probity and Integrity of heart: for he who is in *Error* may think that he is serving God in it, and so it can dwell in the same breast with the Love of God, and of our Neighbour; which are driven out by *Sin*. The true design of Religion, is to give us such degrees of Light and Knowledge, as may preserve us from *Sin*, and purify our Hearts and Lives. Holiness is a much more certain Character of a man's being in the favour of God, than  
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all the degrees of Knowledge possible : Upon all these grounds we may conclude, that there is no reason to think, that God should have made a more certain Provision against *Error*, than he has made against *Sin*. Now what are the Provisions against *Sin*? God offers the free pardon of all past sins, to encourage us to forsake them ; he gives us secret *Assistances* to fortify our Endeavours against sin; he sets before us unspeakably vast Rewards and Punishments ; and he accepts of a sincere, tho imperfect Obedience ; so here a great deal is left to the freedom of our Wills. God will not work in us as in necessary Agents; but having made us capable of Liberty, he leaves us to the use of it, and if we perish, our perdition is of our selves. And therefore, if we will not apply our Faculties, and use our best Endeavours to become truly Holy, the blame must lie upon our selves; for God will not convey into us by his Power such Principles and Dispositions as shall force us to be good : and unless we do what lies in us at the same time, that we pray to him for inward Aid from him, we have no reason to hope that he will hear us.

In like manner, He has call'd us to a Religion that lies in a very little compass; he has order'd it to be deliver'd to us in Books, writ in a great simplicity of Style: He has given us Understandings capable of knowledge, and of great Industry in the pursuit of it; and we feel this difference in our natures, in seeking after Truth, from following after Holiness; that there is no natural disposition in us to Error, or against Truth: whereas there are born in us Propensities, that we feel to be deeply rooted in us against Holiness, and in favour of sin. Among men, some are naturally inquisitive, made and fitted to dive deep into profound Searches; these men do in Religion, as well as in all other Arts and Sciences, so open and clear the way to stower and lazier minds, that they render things easy to them. And as we have no reason to imagine, that God should have laid insuperable Difficulties in the way to Divine Knowledge; so those few that are in it, have been so overcome by the men of Labour and Learning, that even the Church that boasts of Infallibility, would have made a small progress without their Endeavours.

Endeavours. And why should we imagine, that a Religion which we feel to be so hard in practice, should be made so easy in the speculative part, that we should be in no danger, and need no Industry to understand it.

A Promise of the Spirit is indeed pretended, that the Church should be thereby guided *into all Truth*. But it is to be consider'd, that this Promise was made personally to the Apostles, who were Inspir'd, and so were infallibly guided, which appears more plainly from the following words, and *he shall shew* <sup>16. John</sup>  
*you things to come*; that is clearly a <sup>13.</sup> promise of the Spirit of Prophecy, to which, since no body of men can now pretend, they cannot claim the other neither; for both must go together, according to the force of those words: Nor is there any reason from those words to conclude, that this, any more than the Inspiration of the Apostles, was to descend to others after them; or if any will, through a parity of Reason think, that this was to continue in the Church, why should it not belong to every Christian, and not be confin'd to any body or succession of men? especially,



since those who think that the same parity will hold as to the other effects of the Spirit promis'd there, of its *dwelling in them, of bringing things to their remembrance, of giving them Comfort, Peace, Joy and Victory over the World*; and that these do descend to others after the Apostles; do believe that they belong to all Christians, and are not to be contracted to a small number. Now if all the other promises were to descend thus, why not this of being *led into all Truth*, as well as the rest? For all promises, even tho express'd in positive words, do carry a condition naturally in them: so that when this promise is believ'd to belong to all Christians, yet it is not absolute; but supposes men's using their utmost Endeavours with an honest and good Mind; in which case no man can deny, but that whether that promise was specially meant to them or not, yet it shall be so far accomplish'd in them, that they shall be left in no Error that shall be fatal to them; but that either they shall be deliver'd from it, or that it shall be forgiven them, since it is inconsistent with the Notion of infinite Goodness,  
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that any man should perish who is doing all he can in order to his Salvation.

If it be said, That *Error* does disturb the Peace and Order of the Church, beyond what is to be apprehended from *Sin*. *Error* runs men into parties, and out of those, *Factions* do arise, which break not only the Peace of the Church, but the whole order of the World, and the Quiet of Civil Society : whereas *Sin* does only harm to those who are guilty of it, or to a few who may be corrupted by their ill example. But to this it is to be answer'd, That *Sin* does naturally much more mischief to Mankind, than *Error* : he that errs, if he is not Immoral with it, is quiet and peaceable in his Error : therefore still the greatest mischief is from *Sin*, which corrupts men's Natures through its own Influence. And the mischief that *Error* does procure, arises chiefly from the pretensions to Infallibility, or something that is near a-kin to it ; for if men were suffer'd to go on in their Errors with the same undisturbed quiet that they have for most of their sins, they would probably be much quieter  
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in them ; since *Sin* of its nature is a much fiercer thing than a point of Speculation can be suppos'd to be : but if men apprehend Inquisitions, or other Miseries, upon the account of their Opinions, then they stand together, and combine for their own Defence and Preservation ; so that it is not from the Errors themselves, but from the methods of treating them, that all those Convulsions have arisen, which have so violently shaken Churches and Kingdoms.

But the last and Main thing that is urg'd on this Head is, That no private Understanding is strong enough to find out Truth, in all the points of Religion : that it is an indecent and an insolent thing for private men, for Tradesmen perhaps, or for Women, to pretend to expound Scripture, or to judge in points of Religion : This feeds Pride and self-conceit beyond any thing that can be imagin'd ; whereas a Spirit of Submission and Humility, of thinking others, particularly Superiours, wiser than our selves, has so great a resemblance to the Spirit of the Gospel, and seems to agree so well with the design of this Religion, that we must believe it to be  
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a part of it. This is indeed specious; but after all, it is to be consider'd, that God has made us of such a nature, that our apprehensions of things must determine us whether we will or not; and it is not likely that God would make us as he has done, and yet at the same time so limit our Faculties, that they should not be employ'd in the Matters of Religion. We naturally love Freedom, and we believe things the more firmly, the more profoundly we have inquir'd into them; when we come to be once fully satisfi'd about them; when we find our selves oft call'd on in the Scriptures to *search them, to prove all things, to try the Spirits*; when we see a great part of the *New Testament* was directed to whole Churches, to *all the Saints*, that is, to the whole Body of the Christians; when so much of it is writ in the Style of one, that argues, that descends from that Apostolical Authority by which he might have commanded those he writes to, to receive and rest in his Decisions; and that lays things in their natural Connexions and Consequences before those he writes to; we see in that such an appeal  
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to their Reasons, and that even in the Age of Miracles, in which there was another sort of Characters of the Divine Commission, that render'd the Apostles Infallible; when I say, this Appeal was made to their Reasons and Understandings at that time, it seems much more reasonable, that in the succeeding Ages men should have a right to imploy their Faculties in finding out the Sense, and examining the Books of the *New Testament*.

Here let us consider the state of every *Jew* at that time, and see if this reasoning for Authority and Infallibility was not then as strong to keep him in Judaism. There was a Controversy between the Apostles and the *Sanhedrin*, whether *Jesus* was the *Messias*, or not? A decision of this was in a great measure to be made from the Prophecies in the *Old Testament* concerning the *Messias*, which were urg'd by the Apostles; but the *Rabbies*, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, put other senses on these. Now what was a private *Jew* to do? Must he take upon him to judge so intricate a Controversy? Must he pretend to be wiser than all the Doctors  
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of their Law, or the Conveyers of their Traditions to them? Must he set up his Skill and Reason above theirs? Thus we see that if this Reasoning is true, it being founded on Maxims that are equally true at all times, then it was as true at that time as it is now. It is of no force to say, that the Miracles which our Saviour and his Apostles wrought, gave them such Powers, that the people were upon that account bound to believe them, rather than their Teachers. For one part of the Debate was, both the truth of the Miracles, and the Consequences that arose from them. So the Appeal according to this way of Reasoning did still lye to their *Sanhedrim*.

In a word, In such Matters every man must judge for himself, and every man must answer to God for the Judgment that he has made: he judges for no body else, but for himself. He, and He only can be the Judge; and if he uses a due degree of Industry, and frees himself from every corrupt Bias, from Pride, Vain-glory, and affectation of Singularity, or the pursuing any ill ends; under those appearances of searching for Truth, and the adhering to it, he is doing the best thing, which according to that nature of which God has made

made him, he can do ; and so he may reasonably believe, that he shall succeed in it : Nor is there any pride in this, for a man to think according to his own Understanding, no more than to see with his own Eyes. His Humility ought to make him slow and cautious, modest and fearful ; but no humility can oblige him to think otherwise than he feels he must needs think.

Among the *Works of the flesh*, *Heresies* or *Sects* are reckon'd as one sort and species. Now by *Works of the flesh* are to be understood the appetites of a vicious and depraved nature : the meaning therefore of reckoning *Heresies* among these is this, That when a man out of a bad disposition of mind, and on ill designs, chuses to be of a party, he then is a Heretick ; but he that in sincerity of Heart goes into persuasions, from an overcoming sense of their Truth, cannot be one, because he does not chuse his persuasion out of a previous ill design ; but is of it, not out of choice, but necessity ; since his Understanding, in which those matters may be variously represented, offers them so to him, that he must believe them to be true, in the

the same manner in which he apprehends them.

If upon this Principle there happen to be many *Sects* and *Divisions* in the Church; this is a part of that *Woe* that Christ left upon the World, by reason of *Offences and Scandals*; for he foresaw that they *must needs come*. God has made this present Scene of Life, to be neither regular nor secure: The strange Follies and Corruptions of Mankind must have their Influence on Religion, as well as they have on all other things. God has reserv'd a fulness of Light and of unerring Knowledge to another State: Here we are in the dark, but have light enough if we have honest Minds, to use and improve it aright, to guide us thither; and that is the utmost share that God seems to have design'd for us in this Life: we must therefore be contented, and make the most of it that we can.

I go next to shew, That the same Difficulties, if not greater ones, lie upon those who build on Infallibility: for before they can arrive at the use of it, they must have well examin'd,  
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and be fully assur'd of two things; either of which, has greater Difficulties in it than all those put together with which they press us. First, They must be convinced that there is an Infallibility in the Church; and next, they must know to which of those many Churches, into which *Christendom* is divided, this Infallibility is fastned. Unless the design is to make all men take their Religion implicitly from their Fore-fathers, these things must be well consider'd: If men are oblig'd to adhere blindly to the Religion in which they were bred, then *Jews*, *Heathens* and *Mahometans* must continue still where they are. If this had been the Maxim of all times, Christianity had never got into the World.

If then men are allow'd to examine things, they must have very good reason given them for it, before they can believe that there is an Infallibility among men: Their own Reason and Observation offers so much against it, that without very clear grounds they ought not to receive it. Now the reasons to persuade it, must be drawn either from Scripture, or from outward visible Characters that evince

evince it. The Scriptures cannot be urg'd by these men, because the Scriptures, as they teach, have their Authority from the Testimony of the Church; Therefore the *Authority of the Church* must be first prov'd, for the Church cannot give an Authority to a Book, and then prove its own Authority by that Book: This is plainly to prove the Church by her own Testimony, which is manifestly absurd; it being all one, whether she affirms it immediately; or if she affirms it, by affirming a Book in which it is contain'd; here a Circle is made to run for ever round in, Why do you believe the Church? because the Scriptures affirm it; and why do you believe the Scriptures? because the Church affirms them. I do not deny, but they may urge the Scriptures for this, very pertinently against us, who acknowledge their Authority: but I am now considering upon what grounds a man is to be instructed, in the stating the grounds of his own Faith, and resolving it into Principles. In this, an Order must be fix'd, and in the progress of it, every step that is made, must be prov'd without any  
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relation to that, which is afterwards to be proved out of that: and therefore, either the *Church* or the *Scriptures* must be first prov'd, and then other things must be prov'd out of that which is once fix'd and made good.

But in the next place, If we should suffer them to bring Proofs from Scripture, how shall it be prov'd that the true sense of them is that which makes for Infallibility? Other senses may be given to them, which may both agree to the Grammatical Construction of the words, to the contexture of the Discourse, and to the Phrasiology of the Scriptures; who shall then decide this Matter? It were very unreasonable to prove what is their true Sense, by the Exposition that any Church puts on those passages in her own favour: That were to make her both Judge and Party in too gross a manner. Therefore at least those passages, and all that relates to them, must fall under the private Judgment: and in these Instances, every man must be suffer'd to expound the Scriptures for himself; for he cannot be bound to submit to any exposition of them, but that which satisfies his own Reason:

Reason: and if this step is once admitted, then it will appear as reasonable to leave a man, all over, to the use of his Faculties; since these passages, and that which necessarily relates to them, will lead a man into the understanding of the hardest parts of the whole *New Testament*.

If this method is let go, they must prove the Infallibility of the Church by Arguments drawn from some other *Visible Characters*, by which a man is to be convinc'd that God has made her Infallible: If there were such eminent ones, as the gift of Tongues, Miracles or Prophecies, that did visibly attest this; here were a proof that were solid indeed: It were the same with that, by which we prove the Truth of the Christian Religion: But then, these Miracles must be as uncontestedly and evidently proved; they must also belong to this point, that is, they must be Miracles publicly done to prove the truth of this Assertion. But to this Appeal they will not stand, what use soever they may make of it to amuse the weaker and the more credulous. The Character of an uninterrupted Succession

sion from the days of the Apostles, is neither an easier nor a surer one, since other Churches whom they condemn, have it likewise; nor can it be search'd into by a private man, unless he would go into that Sea of examining the History, the Records and Succession of Churches. This is an Enquiry that has in it, Difficulties vastly greater and more insuperable, than all those that they can object to us. If they will appeal to the vast Extent of a Church; that so many Nations and Societies agree in the same Doctrine, and are of one Communion; this will prove to be a dangerous point; for in the state in which we see Mankind, Numbers make a very bad Argument. It were to risque the *Christian Religion* too much, to venture on a Poll with the *Mahometans*: In some Ages the *Semi-Arians* had the better at numbers, and it is a question if at this day those, that are within or without the *Roman Communion* make the greatest body: Nor must a man be put to chuse his Religion by such a laborious and uncertain way of Calculation.

To plead a continuance in the same Doctrine, that was at first deliver'd to the  
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the Church by the Apostles, is to put the matter upon a more desperate issue: For as no man can hope to see to the end of this, so it lets a man in, into all Controversies; when he is to compare the present Doctrine with that which was deliver'd by the Apostles. Let then any Character be assign'd that shall oblige a man to believe the Church Infallible, and it will soon appear very evidently, that the searching into that, must put the world on more difficult Enquiries, than any of those, that we are press'd with: and that in the issue of the whole, the determination must be resolv'd into a private Judgment.

Another Difficulty follows close upon this, which is, In what Church this Infallibility is to be found? Suppose a man was born in the *Greek Church*, at any time since the IX Century, how shall he know that he must seek the Infallibility in the *Roman Communion*, and that he cannot find it in his own? He plainly sees, that the Christian Religion began in the Eastern parts; and by every step that he makes into History, he clearly discerns that it flourish'd for many Ages most eminently there;



but now that there is a breach between them and the *Latins*, he cannot judge to which Communion he is to adhere, without he examines the Doctrine: for both have the outward Characters of a Succession of Martyrs and Bishops, of Numbers, and an appearance of continuing in the same Doctrine; only with this difference, that the *Greeks* have the advantage in every one of these: They have more Apostolical Churches, I mean founded by the Apostles, than the *Latins*; and they have stuck more firmly, with fewer Additions and Innovations, to their Ancient Rituals, than the *Latins* have done: How can he then decide this matter, without examining the grounds of their difference, and making a private Judgment upon a private Examination of the Scriptures or other Authorities? If it be said, that the present depress'd and ignorant state of those Churches makes it now very sensible, that there can be no Infallibility among the Easterns. To this it is to be answer'd, that I have put the case all along from the 9th Century downward; In many of those Ages the *Greeks* were under as good Circumstances,

stances, and had as fair an appearance as the *Latins* had, if not better: for the outward appearances of the *Roman* Communion in the next Centuries, the 10th. and 11th. are not very favourable, even by the Representation that their own Writers have made of them; and if we must judge of the Infallibility of a Church by outward Characters, it may be urg'd with great shews of Reason, that a Church which under all its Poverty and Persecutions, does still adhere to the Christian Religion, has so peculiar a Character of bearing the Cross, and of living in a constant state of Sufferings, that if Infallibility be in the Church as a favour and privilege from God, and not as the effect of human Learning and other Advantages, I should sooner believe the *Greek Church* Infallible, than any other now in the World.

But when these difficulties are all got over, there remain yet new and great ones. Suppose one is satisf'd that it is in the *Roman Church*; he must know where to find it: without this, it is of no more use to him, than if one should tell a hungry man that there is food enough for him, without directing him

where to seek for it : he must starve after all that general Information, if he has not a more particular direction. And therefore it seems very absurd to affirm, that the believing of Infallibility is an *Article of Faith*, but that the proper Subject in whom it rests, is not likewise an *Article of Faith*. This is the general tenet of the whole *Roman* Communion, who that they may maintain their Union, notwithstanding their difference in this, do all agree in saying, that the subject of this Infallibility is not a matter of Faith. This destroys the whole pretension ; for all the Absurdities of no end of Controversies, of private Judgment, and every man's expounding the Scriptures, do return here; and the whole design of Infallibility is defeated : For how can a man be bound to submit to this in any one Instance, or to receive any proposition as coming from an Infallible Authority, if he does not know who has it ? Thus, according to that Maxim of Natural Logick, that a Conclusion can have no certainty beyond that which was in both the Premises ; if it is not certain with whom the Infallibility dwells, as well as that there is an Infallibility

libility in the Church, all the noise about it will be quite defeated, and of no use : If a man had many Medicines, of which one was an Infallible Cure of such or such Diseases, can it be suppos'd that he would communicate these to the World, and tell that one of them was infallible, without specifying which of these was the infallible one ? There are some things that look so extravagant, that really it is an absurd thing to suppose them, of which this seems to be evidently one. That God should have left an Infallibility to his Church, and not have declar'd with whom this, the greatest of all Trusts, to which probably many would pretend, was lodged. So that this, which is the general Doctrine of the whole *Roman* Communion, has an absurdity in it that cannot be reconcil'd to common sense and reason. Many among them put it in the whole diffusive body of all Christians ; to which purpose the words of *Vincentius Lirinensis* are perpetually repeated : but after all, this is only to abuse people ; for if the sense of the Church in all Places and Ages must be sought for, here come endless enquiries, and some of them



them cannot possibly be made, the History of many Ages and Churches being lost. If this is made the Standard, as the labour becomes Infinite, so after all, it resolves into private Judgment, since every man must judge as he sees cause, and must collect the sense of Ages and Churches from Authors, which as they are often both dark and defective, so he must understand them as well as he can, by his own Judgment and Observation, unless some Infallible Expounder, or Declarer of their Sense, is set up; and then the Infallibility is translated from hence to the Expounder. And indeed, it is so hard to trace a great many points of Controversy, thro even the first and best Ages, that the Church must fall under great Difficulties, if this *Hypothesis* is assum'd for maintaining the Infallibility. And when all is done, we see by the performances of the Writers of Controversy, that both sides think they can justify themselves by the Ancient Fathers as well as by the Scriptures: So that all these Absurdities that are urg'd against appealing to the Scriptures, or arguing from them, as that to which all Hereticks do fly, and  
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in which they shelter themselves, will return here, with the more force; because these Writings are much more Voluminous, and are writ in a much more entangl'd and darker Style; so that these two Objections lie against this way, That it is both vast, if not impossible as to the performance of it; and next, that after all the pains that can be taken in it, it is of no use; for private Judgment will still remain; so that Controversies cannot be ended in this way. Others are for the diffusive Church of the present Age, and put Infallibility there: for they reckon thus; That every Age of the Church believes as the former Age believ'd, till this is carried up to the Apostles themselves. This is to resolve all matters into *Oral Tradition*, and to suppose It infallible: and indeed, if we can believe that the generality of *Christians* have in all Ages been wise, honest and cautious; and that the generality of the *Clergy* have in all Ages been faithful and inquisitive, we may rely upon this, and so believe an infallibility: But at the same time, and upon this Supposition we shall have no occasion for it; since if Mankind could be brought to such a pitch of Reformation,

mation, there would be no Controversies, and so no need of a Judge to decide them Infallibly: But if we will admit that, which we see to be true, and know to have been true in all Ages, That men are apt to be both ignorant and careless of Religion; that they go easily into such Opinions as are laid before them by men of Authority and Reputation; and that they have a particular liking to superstitious Conceits, to outward Pomp, and to such Doctrines as make them easy in their ill practices; then the supposition of every Age's believing nothing but that which it learn'd from the former, falls quite to the ground. If we can also imagine, that the Clergy have been always careful to examine Matters, and never apt to add explanations or enlargements even in their own favours; or if on the contrary, we see a gross Ignorance running through whole Ages; if we find the Clergy to have been ambitious and quarrelsome, full of Intrigues and Interests; then all this general specious prejudice in favour of *Oral Tradition* vanishes to nothing. All this will be easier to be conceiv'd, if we state aright the difference

difference between those times and our own. Now, Printing has made Learning cheap and easy; the disposition of Posts, the commerce of Letters, the daily publication of Gazettes and Journals, fill the World with the knowledge of such things as are now in agitation. But when all was to be learn'd from Manuscripts, Knowledge was both dear and difficult; and the methods of communicating with the rest of the World, were both slow, and often broken; so that this thread of *Oral Tradition* will not prove a sure Guide.

There is an humour in men to add to most things, as they pass through their hands; if it were but an Illustration, which seems not only innocent, but sometimes necessary: Those Enlargements would very naturally be soon consider'd as parts of the Doctrine; and to these in a constant gradation, new Additions might still be made, and Inferences from Illustrations would in conclusion become parts of their Doctrine. If I did not limit my self in this Discourse, it were easy to apply this both to the Doctrines of Redeeming out of Purgatory, to those of praying for the dead, of invoking Saints,



Saints, and the worship of Images. It is confess'd by the Assertors of this *Hypothesis*, that the whole face of the Latin Church is chang'd both in her Worship and Discipline; tho these are more sensible things, than points of meer Speculation, which in dark Ages could not be much minded; whereas the other are more visible, and make a more powerful Impression: besides, that all those changes arise out of some new Opinions to which they related, and on which they are founded: A change then that is confess'd to be made in the one, does very naturally carry us to believe that a change was also made in the other. We do all plainly see, that some Traditions that come very near the Age of the Apostles, and that seem to be Expositions of some parts of the *New Testament*, were chang'd in other Ages. The belief of Christ's reigning a Thousand years on earth, is one of these; for which, tho it is now laid aside in that Church, there is another face of a Venerable Tradition, than for most of their Doctrines. We see a practice that was very Ancient, and that continu'd very long, which arose out of 6. Joh. 53. the Exposition of those words, *Except ye eat*

*eat my Flesh, and drink my Blood, ye have no life in you*; by which Infants were made partakers of the *Eucharist*, was afterwards chang'd in that Church; tho it is much less easy to think, how that should be done, than almost how any other should be brought about: for those words being understood of an Indispensible necessity of the Sacrament to Salvation, and all Parents having naturally a very tender Concern for their Children, nothing but an absolute Authority, against which no man durst so much as whisper, could have brought the world to have parted with this. It were easy to carry this to many other Instances, and to shew, that not only Ritual Traditions, but Doctrinal ones, such as were founded on Explanations of passages of Scripture, have varied. It were perhaps too invidious to send men to *Petavius*, to find in him how much the Tradition of the several Ages has vari'd in the greatest Articles of the Christian Doctrine. It is no less certain, that *Origen* laid down a Scheme with relation to the Liberty of man's Will, and the Providence of God, that came to be so universally receiv'd by the *Greek Church*, that both *Nazianzen* and *Basile*

*Basile* drew a sort of System out of his Doctrine, in which those Opinions were asserted, and large Quotations were gather'd out of him, explaining them with most of the Difficulties that do arise out of them: and as this Book had not only *Origen's* own Authority to support it, but likewise that of those two great Men who compil'd it; so it passed down, and was the uncontested Doctrine of the *Greek Church*: But *St. Austin* being engag'd into Disputes with *Pelagius*, fram'd a new System that had never been thought of before him; and yet the Worth and Labours of that Father gave it so vast a Reputation, that his Doctrine was look'd on in several Ages as the Doctrine of the Church; and Learning vanishing at that time, the *Roman Empire* being then overrun by *Barbarians*, his Books came to be so much read, and so universally receiv'd, that it gave no small suspicion, if any one oppos'd his Tenets: yet *Cassian*, who was a *Greek*, and was form'd in their Notions, writ a Book of *Conferences*, which contain'd the precepts of a Monastick State of life, that were digested in so good a method, and writ with so true an Elevation, that it is perhaps  
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Courts, so chang'd the Sense of the greater part of that Church, that it is plain, tho *St. Austin's* Name is too great to be openly disparaged, yet they are now generally in the contrary *Hypothesis*.

This I only instance to shew, that in Speculative Points it is no hard matter to make multitudes go from one Opinion to another, and to alter the Tradition of the Church, that is, to bring one Age of the Church to think otherwise than another did. But after all, *Oral Tradition* cannot be set up as the Judge of Controversies, much less as the living and speaking Judge; it is no real being, nor do we know where to find it: The Tradition of one Body among them differs from another, as in the point of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, in which an Opinion has been lately started, which is now receiv'd into all their Rituals, and has given occasion to many Acts of Worship and publick Devotions, which is most expressly contrary to all Ancient Tradition; and yet is become now so Sacred, that the whole *Dominican* Order feels no small Inconvenience by their being oblig'd as the Followers of  
*Aquinas,*

*Aquinas*, to maintain the contrary. The Traditions of one Nation are question'd by another, particularly in this important Point of the Subject of this Infallibility. It is also impossible for any man to find this out; must he suspend his Opinion till he has gone round the Church to ask every man what he was bred to? This, as it could not be suffer'd, so it could not be so fully found out, as to put a man in the way to end all Controversies; in this a private Judgment must again come in: For tho it were granted that *Oral Tradition* is a Rule to judge Controversies by, it can never be pretended that it is the *living and speaking Judge* that must determine them.

I come now to the two more receiv'd Opinions in this matter; the one puts it in a General Council, and the other puts it in the Pope; and both the one and the other pretend that the *Church Representative* is in them. As for the pretence of some who seem to make a Third party, and believe it to be in a Council confirm'd by the Pope; this is only a plausible way of putting it wholly in the Pope; for if the Definitions of a Council have no Infallibility in them,



till the Pope's Consent and Approbation is given; then it is plain, that all the Infallibility is in him, and that he only chuses to exert it in that solemn way: For either Christ gave it to St. *Peter* and his Successors, or he gave it not; if he gave it not, that pretension is out of doors. If he gave it to them, we plainly see no Limitations in the grant; and whatsoever Rules or Methods may have become authoris'd by Practice and Custom, they are only Ecclesiastical Constitutions, but can never be suppos'd to limit Christ's Grant, or to give any share of it to others.

It will be to no purpose to object here, That as some Constitutions, our own in particular, are so fram'd, that the *Legislative* Authority, tho it flows only from the *King*, yet is limited to such a Method, that it cannot be exerted but with the Concurrence of *Lords and Commons*; so it may be also in the Church; and thus the Pope can only use his Infallibility in Concurrence with a General Council, or at least that both together are Infallible. But tho human Societies may model themselves as to their Legislation which way they will; this will only prove, that as to the Government

vernment and Administration of the Church, she may put her self into such a method, as may be thought most regular and expedient; and thus the Council of *Nice* limited the *Bishops of a Province* to do nothing without the consent of the *Metropolitan*: yet whatever may be done in subaltern Bodies, where things that are done amiss may be rectified by Appeals, the Supreme and last Resort must be left to the full freedom in which Christ has constituted his Church. It must be further consider'd, That Infallibility is not like ordinary Jurisdiction or Legislation, which may be moulded according to the conveniences of Society; it is a Privilege, which if the Church has it at all, she has it by an immediate Grant from Heaven; and so she must enjoy and apply it according to the Tenor of that *Grant*, and she cannot expect to have it continu'd to her, but as she observes the nature of the *Grant*. Indeed if it were given her at large to be modell'd and lodg'd as she pleases, there might be a power in her to limit the use of it, to such forms as should be least liable to Exception or Abuse. But either it is granted to a single person, or to the body in general: If it is granted to a

single person, then he, and he only has it. He may indeed, if he pleases, in order to his being better inform'd or obey'd, call a *General Council*; but their proceedings are only preparatory to his using the *Infallibility*, which is singly in himself: Nor can the Divine Grant be limited as to the exercise or use of it; all such Rules must still be at the Pope's discretion. On the other hand, If the *Grant* is given to the Community of the Pastors, then the *Infallibility* must be in them, and cannot be limited or supposed to stay for the Consent of any one Bishop; for whatsoever regard may be had to any one man, by reason of the Dignity of his *See*, or his other Circumstances; yet still this must be but a point or form of human Prudence: for the *Infallibility* must be where Christ has placed it, and cannot be transferr'd from thence, or be put any where else: So unless it is said, that Christ has put this Infallibility between Pope and Council in so express a manner, as all Constitutions do, which are under a mixed Legislation, which is not pretended; then it must be lodged either in a General Council, or in the Pope, and cannot be  
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in both. This then is to be examin'd in the next place.

I begin therefore to examine the Plea for the Infallibility of Councils. It is at first no small prejudice against this Opinion, that the Church was Constituted, and had continu'd 300 years before any thing that has the shadow of a General Council was call'd: so if an infallible Judge of Controversies be necessary to the Church, here we see she subsisted, in her hardest times, in which she was the most distressed both by Heresies and Persecutions, without one. We also see, That she has been these last 130 years without one, tho there are warm Disputes among them, both in Speculative and Practical Doctrines, both sides reproaching one another with Heresy: and as there is little prospect of a Council, neither the Court of *Rome*, nor the Courts of other Princes who have among them taken away all the Primitive and Canonical Rights of the Church, which an honest Council must desire to regain, being concern'd ever to have one: So if a Council were necessary, it is not very easy to see how it should be brought together. During



the Greatness of the *Roman* Empire, it was in the Emperor's power to have brought the Bishops together at his pleasure: But now this depends upon the Pope, who summons them, having obtain'd the consent of the Princes of *Christendom*, which is subdivided into many different Sovereignties. This Matter depending then so entirely upon the See of *Rome*, there is no reason to look for one from them; for they pretending to have the Infallibility in themselves, should very much derogate from that, if they summon'd a Council for a decision in Doctrinal Matters, they being in possession of judging these at *Rome*: and as for Matters of Discipline, except we can imagine, that they will be content to part with that Authority which they have assum'd over all Sees and Churches, and over all the Canons of the Church; we cannot see reason to fancy that they will ever call one. If they should, the consent of all Sovereigns must likewise be obtain'd; for it being a part of the Civil Authority, to keep Subjects within the Princes Dominions, they cannot be oblig'd to send their Bishops and Divines to a Council unless they please.

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This is a power which seems to belong to them: It is certain they claim it, and very probably would put it in execution, if that matter came to be contested: so here are very great Contingencies to be conquer'd before a General Council can be brought together: Now it is not very likely that Christ should have left so great and so necessary a power to his Church, by which all Controversies must be judged, which yet must be at the mercy of so many Accidents before it can be brought to work; and that the bringing together of those Councils should depend so entirely upon them, against whose Pretensions or Usurpations seems to be most necessary.

But to go more closely to this Opinion If the Infallibility lies in a General Council, it is first necessary that we know who are the Members that must constitute this Council? whether the Laity have a right to be in it, and to judge, or not? We find the *Brethren* as well as the *Elders* join'd with the Apostles in that first Council, to which all subsequent Councils pretend they have succeeded, and whose Style, *It seemed* <sup>15. Act 23.</sup> *good to the Holy Ghost and to us,* is one <sup>to 30.</sup> of

of the Foundations of this Authority. Why then are the *Bretbren*, or the *whole Church*, that is, *Lay Christians*, whom even the Apostles, tho Inspir'd, took to consult and judge with them; Why, I say, are they now excluded? It is also probable, that by *Elders* or *Presbyters* are to be meant those to whom that name was afterwards appropriated; why then are they shut out? In a word, If by a Divine Grant Infallibility belongs to a General Council, we have a just Right to ask for a Definition of the Council, by the same Authority: otherwise we may ascribe Infallibility to those to whom God never meant to give it. Must this Council consist of all the Bishops of the Christian Church? For tho this is both unreasonable and scarce possible, yet if the Infallibility is given in common to the *Pastors* and *Bishops* of the Church, then it will be hard to shut out any from it, if because of their distance, their Age or their Poverty, they cannot come to it: and if tho a general Summons is pretended, to give all men a right to come, yet it is certain that only a few of those who have lived at a distance have come even in the best

best Ages ; Those few will either be men of a greater degree of Wealth, of Heat, or of Health, and will be probably men pickt out by their Princes as the fittest to serve their ends. Now if the Divine Grant be to the whole Body, it will not be easy to shew, that even the most numerous of those Meetings, that pass for *General Councils*, were truly such. Or if it is said, that those few of remote Provinces come in the name of the rest, and so represent them: it must first appear, whether such a thing as *Infallibility* can be deputed: indeed where a Controversy is already known, Churches may send men fully instructed in their Doctrine, who may be thereby well impower'd to declare, how the Doctrine and Tradition has been settled among them. But if a Judgment is to be made upon the hearing of Parties, and the discussing their Reasons on both sides, which must be the case, otherwise here is no Infallible Judge; then in that case, men at a distance, who never heard the matter, but very generally and partially, cannot do this: therefore such as come to a Council, must have the full power  
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of Judging. We know that in Fact such Powers or Instructions are seldom given; and in these latter Ages they will not at all be allow'd; for the Bishops so instructed, must be consider'd as the Proxies of their Principals, and vote in their name; which is contrary to the practice of all Councils, except that of *Basle*; and can never be endured at *Rome*; where every *Italian* Bishop, tho his See is in some places but a small Parish, is reckon'd in the Vote equal with any of those few, that come from great Provinces.

Now these are all Difficulties of such weight, that it will not be easy to settle them by any Divine Warrants, the Scripture being silent as to all such matters. Nor is it clear, whether the whole Council must agree in the same Sentence; or if a major number, tho exceeding by one single voice, is sufficient. If the Council at *Jerusalem* is insisted on, as the Precedent to other Councils, we see that All agreed there: And if this Infallibility is a power that Christ has left in his Church, as necessary for her Peace and Preservation, it may be reasonable enough to suppose, that for  
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giving their decisions the more Authority, he should so order this matter by his Providence, that they should all agree in their Judgments : For after all, when a thing is carri'd but by One vote, tho according to the Rules of all Human Courts, it must be good in Law ; yet it is not easy to think, that God would lodge such an Authority, and suffer it to turn upon so small and so despicable an Inequality.

In conclusion, It does not appear from the Scriptures, whether in such decisions the Bishops should expect a Divine Inspiration, such as that which settled the Judgment in the Council of *Jerusalem*, or not. The meaning of these words, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*, seems to be this ; That as they of themselves were resolv'd on making that decision ; so an immediate Inspiration, which was own'd by them all, did finally determine them in their Resolution: or it may be suppos'd to relate to that Effusion of the Holy Ghost upon *Cornelius* and his Friends : that being a solemn Declaration, that men might be accepted of God, while they were yet uncircumcised ; and that by consequence,

quence, the *Gentiles* were not bound to the observance of those Precepts, which did not oblige any but such as were circumcised. So that what they then decreed, was only a general Inference which they drew from that particular case : And so they made a decision in favour of all the *Gentiles*, from that which had happened to *Cornelius*. This is the clearest account that can be given of these words, which understood otherwise, look as if they had added their decision, as the giving a further weight to that made by the Holy Ghost, or as a Vehicle to convey it, which is too absurd to suppose : Now if any build upon that Council, they must make the parallel just, and shew that the Holy Ghost interposes in their Conclusions.

To all these Considerations, we must add this, That the first Councils are to be supposed to have understood their own Authority ; or at least the sense of the Church at that time concerning it. They considered the several Passages of Scripture, and framed their Decisions out of them ; which were afterwards defended by some who had  
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been of their Body: not as if their Authority or Decision had put an end to the Controversy. They urge indeed the great numbers of the Bishops that made those Decisions; but use that rather as a strong Inducement to beget a prejudice in their favour, than as an Authority that could not be contradicted.

In this strain does *Athanasius* defend the Council of *Nice*: For indeed even that of *Numbers* was to be sparingly urged, after the Council at *Arimini*, where *Num-*

*Athan. de*  
*Decr. Sin.*  
*Nicen.*

*bers* were on the other side. The chief *Aug. con.*  
*Maxim.*

Writers of those times make their Ap-  
*l. 3. c. 19.*

peals to the Scriptures; they bring many Passages out of them, and are very short and defective in making out the Doctrine of the Church from Tradition, or Fathers. *Athanasius* names not above four, and these had lived very near that time. Two of them, *Origen* and *Dionysius*, were claimed by the other Side. There are but few, and very late Authorities alledged in the Council of *Ephesus*; and those at *Chalcedon* made their definition chiefly upon the Authority and regard to Pope *Leo's* Letter, in which there are indeed very many Allegations from Scripture,  
but



but not so much as one from any Father. Thus it is plain, both from the Practice of those Councils, and the Disputes of those who writ in defence of their Decisions, that it was not then believed, that they had any Infallible Authority: since that is never so much as once claimed by any of that time, that I know of; a great deal being said to the contrary by many of them. It is true, there are some high Expressions, both in some of the Councils, and in some of the Fathers of that time, which import that they believed *they were directed by God*. But this is no other, than what may be said concerning any Body of Good and Learned men, who use a great deal of pious caution in forming their Decisions. Therefore great difference is to be made between a plain assuming an Infallible Authority, and Rhetorical Hints of their being guided by the Holy Ghost; the former does not appear, and the latter shews, that such as used those ways of speaking, did not think them infallible; but they believing that they had made good Decisions, did upon that presume that they were guided by the Holy Ghost.

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And thus it appears in a great variety of Considerations, that we have no reason to believe that there is an Infallibility in a General Council; and that we do not so much as know what is necessary to make one. And to sum up all that belongs to this Head, The decisions of those Councils must have an Infallible Expounder, as well, as it is urged, that the Books of the Scriptures cannot be of use to us, if there is not in the Church a *living speaking Judge* to declare their true sense. Now this is rather more necessary with relation to the Decrees of Councils, which as they are Writings, as well as the Scriptures, so they being much more Voluminous; and more artificially contrived, and couched, need a Commentary much more than a few plain and simple Writings, which make up the New Testament. If then the Councils must be expounded, there must be, according to their main reasoning, an Infallibility lodged somewhere else, to give their sense: And the necessity of this has appeared evidently since the time of the Council of *Trent*; for both upon the Article of *Divine Grace*, and upon their Sacrament

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ment of *Penance*, there have been, and still are, great debates among them concerning the meaning of the Decrees of that Council; both Parties pretending that they are of their side. Who then shall decide these Controversies, and expound those Decrees? This must not be laid over to the next General Council, for then the Infallibility will be in an Abeyance, and lost during that Interval.

So this Inference leads me to the last Hypothesis, That the Infallibility is in the Pope, and in him only. And it must be confessed, that this is the only Opinion that is consistent to it self in all its parts: Here is a *living and speaking Judge*, and if he is not Infallible, it is plain that they have no Infallibility at all among them. And yet his Infallibility, as it is a thing of which no man ever dreamt for the first nine or ten Ages, so it has such violent presumptions against it, that without very express proof it will not be reasonable to expect that any should believe it. The Ignorance of most Popes, the Secular Maxims by which they are governed, the Political Methods in which

which they are elected, the Forgeries, chiefly of their Decretal Epistles, by which their Authority was principally asserted, and which are now as universally rejected as spurious, as they were once owned to be genuine; their aspiring to the same Authority in Temporals, for many Ages, which they have gained in Spirituals; their having dissolved the whole Authority of the Primitive Constitutions, and Ancient Canons of the Church, and all that practice of Corruption that is in all their Courts, by which the whole order of the Church is totally reversed: All these are such lawful and violent Prejudices against them, that they must needs fortify a man in opposition to any such Pretension, till it is very plainly proved.

These Characters agree so very ill with Infallibility, that it is not easy to believe they can be together: Since for above 800 years together the Papacy, as it is represented by their own Writers, was, perhaps, the worst Succession of men that can be found in any History: And it will seem strange, if God has lodged such wonderful Powers

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with such a sort of men, and yet has taken so little care of them, to make them look like the proper Subjects of that Authority. We do plainly see, that the Primitive Church, even when they enlarged their Papal Authority, as to Government, did it; what out of a respect to *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul*, who they believed founded that Church, and suffered Martyrdom in it; and what, or most chiefly, out of their regard to the dignity of that *City*, it being the Head of the Empire, under which they lived; and this appeared by their giving the same Priviledges to *Constantinople*, when it became the *Imperial City*, which was made second to the other, and equal to it, except only in order and rank: But as for the Doctrine of the Church, tho still the regard to *St. Peter* went far; yet when *Liberius* subscribed to *Semiarrianism*, it was never pretended that his Authority had in any thing altered the case, which must have been urged, if he had been believed Infallible.

The Case of *Honorius* does fully discover the sense of the Church in the Sixth Century, concerning their Infallibility: He was condemned as a *Monothelite*,

*thelike*, by a General Council, which was confirmed by several Popes, who did by name condemn him. Now we are not a whit concerned in his Cause and Condemnation, whether it was just or not; and whether it was upon a due examination or not : It is enough for us that a General Council, as well as several Popes in that Age, had never dreamt of Infallibility ; otherwise they could not have condemned him, or believed him capable of Heresy. This might be brought down to many later Instances, in which several Popes have been charged with Heresy ; one shall suffice.

They have pretended to an Authority from Christ, to depose Kings, and to transfer their Dominions to others : This they have not only done by force and violence, but by many solemn Decisions, in which this Authority has been claimed as founded on several Passages of Scripture, not forgetting those, *In the beginning*, not, *In the beginnings*, *did God create*, and *the great light that rules the day* ; these, with many more, they have urged both from the *Old and New Testament*. This they did with the utmost pomp of solemn Declarations ; and up-

on this Head they filled the World with Wars: Some few writ against these Pretensions, but the Popes stood to them, and carried them on in a course of five or six Centuries with all possible vigour: And during those Ages this Doctrine grew to be universally received by the Learned and Unlearned, by all the Universities, all the Divines, Canonists, and Casuists, not one single Person daring to oppose so strong a Current: So that Cardinal *Perron* was in the right, when he affirmed that this was the Doctrine universally received in the Church for the last six Centuries, without contradiction, before *Calvin's* days; and those few that seemed to write against it, durst only oppose the Pope's direct Power in *Temporals*, as the *Superior Lord*, to whom Kings were but *Vassals*, but durst not contradict his Authority over them in case of *Heresy*.

This then being so publick and uncontested a Point, as it shakes the Authority of *Oral Tradition*, and shews, how Doctrines, even in points in which mens Interests did strongly oppose them, could get into the Church, though not derived down from the Apostles; so it  
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totally destroys the Pope's Pretensions to Infallibility, in the Opinion of all such as think this to be simply unlawful; and that it subverts the *Order* which God has settled in the World. For there is not any one Fact in History that can be less contested, than that the Popes have assumed this Authority, and that they have vouched Divine Warrants for it.

To this also we may well add another train of Difficulties, about the Right to chuse this Pope; in whom it is vested; what number is necessary for a Canonical Election; and how far *Simony* voids it; and who is the Competent Judge of the *Simony*; or in the case of different Elections, who shall judge which of the two pretending Popes, was truly chosen. It must also be cleared in what form he is to proceed, when Infallibility accompanies his Decisions; whether he may proceed upon his own sense, or with the advice of others; and who these must be; and what Solemnities in the Publication are necessary to make him speak *ex Cathedra*. Here a great variety of Difficulties arise, which ought to be well cleared to



us, before we can be bound to acquiesce in so great a Point as his Infallibility : And we ought to have these things made out by a Divine Authority ; for if Christ has made a special grant of Infallibility to the Bishops of *Rome*, no Forms nor Rules invented by men can limit that. These may be Rules agreed on as fit to be observed ; but after all, if a Pope is Infallible, by a Commission from Jesus Christ, he must be believed Infallible, tho he should break through all those Forms, that men have only invented.

It remains then that we consider those Proofs that are brought to confirm this ; since without very good ones, it is extream unreasonable to urge such a Point, or to expect that it should be submitted to. Here all that was said formerly against proving this matter from Scripture, is to be remembred : But waving that in this place, the Passages that seem to be formal, for the Church in general, are brought to support the Papal Authority ; For if great Powers are given to the Church, and if it does not appear that they are any where else, then they must be found in him ; he being the Church-Representative. But this  
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is an absurd Imagination, unless they can shew us, that God has lodged that Representation in that See. As for that of 18. *St. Matthew 17. for telling the Church*, and that such as do not hear it, *shall be to us as Heathens and Publicans*: it must be confess'd, that these words barely in themselves, and as separated from all that went before, seem to speak out all that they plead for: but when the occasion of them, and the matter that governs them, is consider'd, nothing is plainer, that our Saviour is here speaking only, of such quarrellings and differences as may happen to fall out among Christians, who are by these words oblig'd to try all amicable ways of settling them: First by private endeavours, then by the interposition of Friends; and finally, by the Authority of that Body or Church to which they belong'd; and such as could not be prevail'd on by those methods, were to be esteem'd no true Christians, but to be look'd on as *Heathens*, or as very bad men. They might upon that be excommunicated, and prosecuted afterwards in Civil Courts: since they had no right any more to the *Tenderness and Charity* that

that ought to be among the Members of the Church. This Exposition has a fair appearance, and looks like being true, to say no more at present, for that is enough, according to what was formerly laid down, since the proofs of such a matter as this is, ought to be full and home: This seems to look more favourable towards the way of the Congregational Churches, in which the whole Assembly of the Brotherhood govern all their Concerns; but does not so much as by a hint seem to favour the pretensions, either of Popes or Councils.

That Character of the Church given  
 1 Tim. 3: by St. Paul, that it is *the Pillar and*  
 15. *the Ground of Truth*, is a figurative form of Speech, upon which it is never safe to build, much less to lay so much weight upon it: It is a description that the Jews gave to their Synagogues, and is by St. Paul appli'd to the Church of *Ephesus*; for it is visible, that it has no relation to the Catholick Church: it being only an enforcing consideration to oblige *Timothy* to a greater caution in his Behaviour there. It has visibly a relation to Inscriptions that were made on *Pillars*: but whatever be the strict Importance

Importance of the Phrase, it is clear, that it is but a Phrase, and therefore it cannot bear that which is raised upon it.

Some Reflections have been already made on those promises of Christ to his Apostles, that *the Spirit should lead them into all Truth*, which plainly related to the infallible Conduct under which they were to be put ; but from these words themselves, there is no reason to infer, that the Promises were to descend to any after them ; they relate to an immediate Inspiration ; so if they prove any thing, they prove too much, That the Church must still have in it a successive Inspiration. It is urg'd, that a parity of Reason leads us to conclude, That this promise was still to continue, tho not in the same manner, in the Church : But all such Arguments are only conjectural Inferences, and are at best but probabilities ; so that there is no arguing from them, and therefore this can signify nothing.

Those words of our Saviour's with which St. *Matthew* concludes his Gospel, *Lo I am with you always, even to the* <sup>28. Mat.</sup> *end of the world*, infer no Infallibility, but <sup>20.</sup> import only a promise of Assistance and Protection, which was a necessary encouragement



2 Cor. 6.

16.

13. Heb. 5.

agement to the Apostles, who were sent out upon so hard and laborious as well as dangerous Commission. In both Testaments by God's *being with any, by his walking with them; his being in the midst of them; his never leaving them, nor forsaking them*; no more is meant, but that he watches over them, that he directs, assists and protects them; and there being a vast difference between all this and Infallibility, it can prove nothing of that kind.

So that in conclusion, the whole matter must turn upon the words of Christ to St. Peter; for these do not relate to the Church in general, but seem to belong particularly to him: yet there is not so much as a hint given to lead us to apply them to his Successors; nor does he give any himself when he was writing his Second Epistle, not long before his death, since he mentions a Revelation that he had of its being near him; yet he does not in those last Warnings against the Corrupters of this Holy Religion, give so much as a remote Intimation of any Authority that he was to leave behind him for the Government of the Church, and preserving

preserving it pure from both Error and Immorality. Nor were these words of Christ's so much as pretended for many Ages, to import any Authority or Infallibility lodg'd with St. *Peter's* Successors. I do not now question his being at *Rome*, tho that matter is really so doubtful, that even there, we are far from any degree so much as of human Certainty. But to go on with those words of our Saviour's to St. *Peter*, There is one great presumption that lies against any peculiar Authority given to him by them, since we see not the least appearance, either in the *Acts of the Apostles*, or Epistles, of any peculiar Appeals or References made to him: On the contrary, He seems to be call'd to an account for his going to *Corneilius*, and baptising the *Gentiles*; he only delivers his Opinion as one person in the Council of *Jerusalem*; but St. *James* gives the definitive Sentence. St. *Paul* never makes any Appeal to him, in the Contests of which he writes; He settles Matters, and makes Decisions, without ever having recourse to his Authority. He seems on the contrary to avoid it, and when probably some  
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of the Judaisers among the *Galatians*, were appealing to him, or at least to some practices of his; *St. Paul* shews how he had fail'd in those matters: for tho' the Apostles were so govern'd by Divine Inspiration, that they could not err nor be mistaken in points of Doctrine; yet as to their Actions, they were left to the freedom of their own Wills, and so humane frailty might in some Instances have prevail'd over them. It is evident from that Epistle, that *St. Paul* own'd no dependance upon him, nor did he submit in any sort to him, as having any degrees in his Commission or Authority superiour to his own. These are all such pregnant Intimations, as make it more reasonable to give such a sense to those words, as will import no special Authority given to *St. Peter*: since it does not appear, that either *St. Peter* or the Apostles themselves understood them so: for since they persist afterwards to have their Disputes, *which of them was the greatest*; it is plain, they did not understand this to be the Importance of our Saviour's Words. And it is as plain, that no part of the Scripture-history makes for this, but very much against it. Now

Now as to the words themselves, they begin with an Allusion to his Name, and Phrases built upon such Allusions, are seldom to be strictly and Grammatically understood. By, *Upon this* <sup>16. Mat.</sup> *Rock will I build my Church*, many of <sup>18, 19.</sup> the Fathers have understood the *person of Christ*; others, which amounts to the same thing, *faith in him*, or the *Confession of that faith*; for strictly speaking, *the Church*, can only be said to be founded upon Christ and his Doctrine. In a secondary Sense, it may indeed be said to be founded on the *Apostles*, and upon St. Peter as the *first* in Order, as well as the forwardest among them: and since the Apostles are all reckon'd *Foundations*, tho this <sup>2. Eph. 20.</sup> should be allow'd to be the meaning of these words, which yet is a sense in which they were not taken for many Ages, it will import nothing peculiar to St. Peter. What follows, *of the gates of hell's not being able to prevail against it*, may either be understood according to the Greek Phrase, *Death*, which is often thus represented as the entrance to the *Grave*, which is the signification of the word rendered *Hell*; and then the meaning



meaning is, *That the Church which Christ was to found, was never to come to a period, and to die, as the Jewish Religion was then to do: Or by a Phrase common among the Jews, who understand by Gates, the Wisdom and Strength of a Place; since their Courts and Councils were held near their Gates: these words may signify, that all the Powers of Darknels, with all their force and spite, should not be able to bear down or destroy this Church; but this does not bar any Errors or Corruptions from creeping into any part of it: For the word rendred prevail, properly signifies an entire Victory, by which it should be conquered and extirpated.*

As for the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, that Christ promised to give to him, it must again be consider'd, That these words are figurative, so that it is never safe to argue from them: since figures are capable of larger and narrower Significations. No man will carry them so far, as to think that the power of giving or denying Eternal Life, is hereby put in *St. Peter*; for that is singly in the Mediator's hands. This shews how difficult it is to know  
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how much is to be drawn from a Figure.

By *Kingdom of Heaven*, through the whole Gospels, with very few or no exceptions, we find that the Dispensation of the *Messias* is to be understood; this appears evident from the first words with which both *St. John Baptist*, and our Saviour begun their preaching, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*: and this is the sense in which it is taken in all those Parables, to which our Saviour compares *the Kingdom of Heaven*; and in those words, *the Kingdom of Heaven is among you, and it cometh not with observation*; or the like. This being laid down as that which will soon appear to every one that shall attentively read the Four Gospels; then by the *Keys* of the Dispensation of the *Messias*, the most natural and least forc'd signification, and that which agrees best with those words of the same figure, *he that hath the Key* <sup>3. Rev. 7.</sup> *of the house of David*; *he that openeth and no man shutteth*; and *that shutteth and no man openeth*; and also with the Phrase of the *Key of knowledge*, by which the Lawyers were described; for <sup>11. Luke 52.</sup> they had a *Key with writing Tables* given

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them as the Badg of their Profession, which naturally imported that they were to open the door for others entring into the knowledge of the Law : With which our Saviour reproach'd them, that they *entred not in themselves, and hinder'd those that were entring*. From all these hints, I say, we may gather, that according to the Scripture-phrase, by the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, is meant, that *St. Peter* was first to open the Dispensation of the Gospel ; which he did in the first preaching of it to the *Jews*, after the wonderful *Pentecost* : and this was yet more eminently perform'd by him, when he first open'd the *door to the Gentiles* : to which the words of the *Kingdom of Heaven* seem to have a more particular respect. This Dispensation was committed to him, and executed by him ; and seems to be claim'd by him, as his peculiar Privilege in the Council at *Jerusalem* ; so we may safely conclude, that this is the natural meaning of these words : and is all that was to be imported by them : and those who carry them further, must use several distinctions, lest they give *St. Peter* that which belongs only to our Saviour himself.

What

What follows concerning the *binding and loosing in Heaven, whatsoever he should bind or loose on earth*; is no special Privilege of *St. Peter's*, since we find the same words said by our Saviour to all his Apostles; so that this was given in common to all the Apostles. According to the sense now given of *the Kingdom of Heaven*, these words will be easily understood, which are otherwise very dark: but they are full of figures, and so are not to be too far stretch'd. By *binding and loosing*, we find the *Rabbins* do commonly understand the *affirming or denying* the Obligation of any Precept that was in dispute. This then being a common form of speech among the *Jews*, a genuine Paraphrase of these words is; That Christ committed to the Apostles the dispensation of his Doctrine to the World; in which they should be authoris'd to dissolve the Obligation of the Mosaical Laws, and to confirm such parts of them as were Moral, and perpetually binding; which the Apostles should do, with such visible Characters of a Divine Authority, empowering and conducting them in it, that it should be very evident, that what they did on *Earth*, was ratified

18. Mat.

18.

in *Heaven*. These words thus understood, carry in them a plain sense, which agrees well with the whole design of the Gospel; but whatsoever may be their sense, it is plain, that there was nothing here peculiarly given to *St. Peter*.

22. Luke  
32.  
21. John  
15.

As for our Saviour's praying for *St. Peter*, that his faith might not fail, and his restoring him to his Apostolate by a threefold charge, *feed my sheep or lambs*; it has such a visible relation to his fall, and threefold denial, that it is not worth the while to enlarge on; or to shew, that it is capable of no other signification, and cannot be carried further.

And thus I have gone through all that is brought from the Scriptures, for asserting the Infallibility of the Church; and in particular of the Pope's; and have, I hope fully shew'd, that they cannot bear that sense, but that they must genuinely bear a plainly different sense, which does no way differ from our Doctrine. It was necessary to clear all this; for tho, as was before made out, it is no proper way for them to resolve their Faith by passages out of Scripture: yet these are very good objections to us, who upon other Reasons do submit to their Authority.

There

There remains but one thing now to be clear'd, which is this; If the Church is not Infallible, it does not easily appear what certainty we can have concerning the Scriptures, since we believe them upon the Testimony of the Church; and we have no other knowledge concerning them, but what has been handed down to us by Tradition. If therefore this is fallible, we may be deceiv'd in our persuasion even concerning them. But here a great difference is to be made, between the carrying down a Book to us, and the Oral delivering of a Doctrine; it being almost as hard to suppose how the one could fail, as how the other should not fail. The Books being in many hands, spread over the whole Churches, and read in all their Assemblies, makes this to be a very different thing, from discourses that are in the Air, and to which every man that reports them, is apt to give his own Cue.

A great difference is also to be made, between the Testimony of a Witness, and the Authority of a Judge. If in any Age of the Church, Councils had examin'd controverted Writings, and had upon that past Sentence, this had



been indeed a judging the matter, but no such thing ever was. The Codex of the Scriptures was settled some Ages before any Provincial Council gave out a Catalogue of the Books which they held as Canonical: For no ancient General Council ever did it; and tho the Canonical Epistles, of which, there not being such a certain Standard, they not being addrest to any particular Body that had preserv'd the Originals, were not so early nor so universally receiv'd as the others were; yet the matter was settled without any Authoritative Judgment, only by examining Originals, and such other Methods by which all things of that nature can only be made out. But this matter having been so fully consider'd and stated in another Discourse, I shall dwell no longer on it in this.

As for the Authorities which are brought from some of the Ancients, in favour of the Authority of the Church, and of Tradition; it is to be considered, that though the word *Tradition*, as it is now used in Books of Controversy, imports a sense opposite to that which is written in the Scripture; yet *Tradition* is of its own signification,

cation, a general word, that imports every thing which is *delivered*: And in this sense the whole Christian Religion, as well as the Books in which it is contained, was naturally called the *Tradition of the Apostles*: So that a great many things, said by Ancients to magnify the Tradition of the Apostles, and by way of Appeal to it, have no relation to this matter. Besides, when men were so near the Apostolical Age, that they could name the Persons from whom they had such or such hints, who had received them from the Apostles, or from Apostolical men; *Tradition* was of another sort of Authority, and might have been much more safely appealed to, than at the distance of so many Ages: Therefore if any thing is brought either from *Irenæus* or *Tertullian*, that sounds this way, here is a plain difference to be observed between their Age and ours, which does totally diversify it.

But to convince the World how early Tradition might either vary or misrepresent matters; let the Tradition not only in, but before *St. Irenæus's* time, concerning the observation of *Easter*,

be considered ; which goes up as high as St. *Polycarp's* time : We find, that as the several Churches adhered to the practices of those Apostles that founded them, so they had quite forgot the grounds on which it seems these various Observations were founded : Since though it is very probable, that those who kept *Easter* on the *Jewish* day, did it, that by their condescendence to the *Jews* in that matter, they might gain upon them, and soften their Prejudices against Christianity : yet it does not appear that their Successors thought of that at all ; for they vouched their Custom, and resolved to adhere to it ; nor is there any thing mentioned on either side, that gives us the account of those early, but different Observations. If then Tradition failed so near its Fountain, we may easily judge what account we ought to make of it at so great a distance.

Many things are brought with great pomp out of St. *Austin's* Writings, magnifying the Authority of the Church, in terms, which after all the allowances that are to be made for his diffuse and *African* Eloquence, can hardly be justified ;

fied : Yet when it is considered, that he writ against the *Donatists*, who had broke the *Unity of the Church* upon the pretence of a matter of *fact*, concerning the Ordainers of *Cecilian*, which had been, as to the point of *fact*, often judged against them : And yet as they had distracted the whole *African Churches*, so they were men of fierce and implacable Tempers, that broke out daily into acts of great fury and violence ; and had set up a principle that must for ever break the Peace and Union of the Church ; which was, that the vertue of all the publick Acts of Worship, of Sacraments and Ordinances, depended upon the personal worth of him that officiated ; so that his Errors or Vices did make void all that past through his hands. Now when so warm a man as St. *Austin* had so bad a Principle, and so ill a disposition of mind in view, it is no wonder if he brought out all that he could think on upon the subject ; so no wonder if he raises the Authority and the Privileges of the Church to a vast height : Yet after all, these were not his settled thoughts ; for he goes off from them, whensoever he has an eye on his Disputes against the  
*Pela-*



*Pelagians* ; for the System which he had framed in those Points, could not bear with any other notion of the *Church*, but that of the persons *predestinated*, to whom all the Promises belonged. And thus whatever he himself asserts in his zeal against the *Donatists*, comes to be thrown down, when the *Pelagians* are in his view ; so we see from hence how much deference is due to his Authority in this Point.

The last head relating to this whole matter, is to explain in what the Authority of the Church does consist ; what it is both in matters of Faith and Discipline. As to matters of Faith, it is certain, That every body of men is bound to study to maintain its own Order and Quiet, and must be authoris'd to preserve it ; otherwise it cannot long continue to be *one Body*. This binds the body of Christians yet much more, who are strictly charged to *love one another, to worship God with one heart and mouth ; to be of the same mind and judgment ; to assemble themselves together, and to withdraw from all such as cause divisions*, or corrupt the great Trust of the Faith committed to their keeping. It must be there-

therefore a great part of the duty of those that are bound to *feed the flock*, to observe when any begin to broach new Opinions, that they may confirm the weak, and stop the mouths of gain-sayers: which as the Apostles themselves did during their own lives; so by the charges that they gave to the Churches in their Epistles, and more fully by those given to *Timothy* and *Titus*, it appears that a main part of their Care and Authority was to be employ'd that way. When therefore any new Doctrines are started, or when there arise Disputes about any part of Religion, the Pastors of the Church ought to consider, whether or not it is in a matter of any great consequence, in which the Faith or Lives of men may be concerned? If the point is not of great importance, it is a piece of wisdom to connive at lesser matters, and to leave men to a just freedom in things where that freedom is not like to do hurt; only even there, care is to be taken to keep men in temper, that they become not too keen in the management of their Opinions; and that they neither disturb the Peace of the Church, nor State, upon that account.

If

If the matters appear to be great, either in themselves, or in the consequences that are like to follow upon them, then the Pastors of the Church ought to consider them with an equal and impartial mind; they ought to hear Parties fully, and weigh their Arguments carefully; they ought to examine the sense of the Scriptures, and of the best times of the Church, upon those Heads, and finally to give Sentence: In which two things are to be considered; the one is, That great regard is due to a Decision made by a Body of men, who seem to have acted without prejudice or interest. For I confess it will be very hard to maintain such a respect for a Company, in which matters are carried with so much Artifice and Intrigue, as even Cardinal *Palavicini* represents in the management of the Council of *Trent*; where Bishops were caressed or threatned, well paid, or ill used, as they gave their Voices: Such a proceeding as this will rather inflame, than allay the opposition; but a fair and equitable, a just and calm way of examining matters of dispute, will naturally beget a respect, even in such as cannot yield a submission to their Decrees.

After

After all, it must be confessed, That no Man can be bound to a blind Submission, unless we suppose an Infallibility to be in the Church ; yet Private Men owe to Publick Decisions, when decently made, a due respect ; they ought to distrust their own judgments, and examine the matter more accurately : But if they are still convinc'd that the Decision is wrong, they are bound to persist in their own thoughts ; only they ought to oppose modestly ; to consider well the importance of Order and Peace ; and whether their Opinion, even suppose it true, is worth the Noise that may be made about it, or the Disorders that may follow upon it. After all, If they are still convinced that their Opinions are true, and that they relate to the indispensable Duties of Religion, or the necessary Articles of Christianity, they must go on, as they will answer it to God, upon the sincerity of their Hearts, and the fulness of their Convictions : So that the Definitions of the Church may have very good Effects, even when it is not pretended that they are Infallible.

Another



Another thing to be consider'd in those Decisions is, That though they are not Infallible, yet they may have Authority, in this respect, That they are the established Doctrine of such a Body of Christians, who will have no other to be taught among them, and will admit none to be of their Body, or at least to be a Teacher among them, who is not of the same mind. In this, it is certain, great Tenderness and Prudence is to be used, and the natural liberty of Mankind is not to be too much limited: But yet as any Man may fix and declare his own Opinion; so certainly by a much greater parity of reason, any Society or Body of Men may declare their Opinions, and so far fix them, as to exclude all other Doctrines, and the Favourers of them, from being of their *Body*, or from bearing any *Office* in it: So that though such Decisions do not enter into Mens Consciences, nor bind them further than as they are convinced by the Reasons and Authorities upon which they are founded; yet they may have a vast influence on the Order and Peace of Churches and States.

As

As to Rituals; it is certain that there are many little Circumstances and Decencies that belong to the Worship of God, the Order of Religious Assemblies, and their Administrations; and that in these, the Pastors of a Church, by the Natural Right that all Societies have to keep<sup>r</sup> themselves in order, must have a Power to determine all things of this nature. This becomes yet clearer in the Christian Societies, from the Rules that the Apostles gave to the Churches, *To do all things in Order*, and for the ends of *Edification and Peace*. There is not one of the Rules laid down in Scripture, concerning the Sacraments, or the Officers of the Church, to which many Circumstances do not belong; now either these must be all left to every Man's liberty, which must needs create a jarring disagreement in the several parts of this Body, that would both breed confusion, and look very ridiculous and absurd; or there must be an Authority in the Pastors of the Church to meet together, and to settle these by mutual consent. All the greater Bodies of those who divide from our Constitutions, have some Rituals of their own;

own; so the Dispute in this, must only be concerning the degrees and extent of this Power: For if any Authority is allowed, it will not be easy to fix any other Bounds to it, but this, that it must not invade the Divine Authority, nor do any thing beyond the Rules and Limits set in the Scriptures; for if there is the least degree of Authority in the Church, the grounds upon which it is founded, must carry it to every thing that cannot be proved to be unlawful. Bare unfitness, though it ought to be a Consideration of great weight when such things are deliberated about; yet when they are once concluded, can be no reason for disobeying them, since the fitness of Order, and the decency of Unity and Obedience is certainly of much more value, than any special unfitness that can be supposed to be in any particular Instance. So that one of these two must be admitted, either that the Pastors of the Church have no sort of Authority, even in the smallest Circumstances, but are limited by the Rules of the Scripture, and can only execute them strictly, and not go beyond them in a tittle; or this Authority must go to every

ry thing that is lawful ; on that I will dwell no longer here , the fuller discussion of this matter belonging to another Discourse.

It is a natural Consequence of the Authority given to the Pastors of the Church, That they having declared and fixed their Doctrine ; and having settled Rules for their Rituals , may excommunicate such as either do not live according to the Rules of their Religion , which are a main part of their Doctrine ; or do not obey the Constitutions of their Society. Excommunication, in the strictness of things , is only the Churches refusing to receive a person into her Communion ; now as every Private man is the Master of his own Actions , it is clear that every Body of Men must also be the Masters of theirs : And thus, though Excommunication in some respects is declaratory, it being a solemn denunciation of the Judgments of God , according to the tenor of the Gospel, against persons who live in an open violation of some one or more of its Laws ; so it is also an authoritative Act, by which a Church refuses to communicate with such a Person. In this, it is true, Churches

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ought to make the *terms of Communion* with them as large and extensive as may consist with the Rules of Religion, and of Order; but after all, they having a Power over themselves, and their own Actions, must be supposed to be likewise cloathed with a Power to communicate with other Persons, or not to do it, as they shall see cause; in which, great difference is to be made between this Power in it self, and the use and management of it: for any Abuses, whether true, or only pretended, though they may well be urged to procure a proper Reformation of them, yet cannot be alledged against the Power itself, which is both just and necessary.

It is not so very clear to state the Subordination in which the Church is to be put under the Civil Power, and how far all Acts of Church Power are subject to the Laws and Policies of those States to which the several Churches do belong. It is certain, that the Magistrate's being a Christian or not, does not at all alter the Case, that has only a relation to his own salvation; for his Authority is the same, whatever his Belief may be in matters of Religion. His  
design

design to protect or to destroy Religion, alters the Case more sensibly; for the regards to that Protection, and to the Peace and Order that follow upon it, together with the Breaches and Disorders that might follow upon an ill understanding between Church and State, are matters of such Consequence, that it is not only meer Prudence, which may give perhaps too strong a Bias to carnal Fears and Policies; but the Rules of Religion, which oblige the Church to study to preserve that Order and Protection, which is one of the chief Blessings of the Society, and a main Instrument of doing much good. Great difference is to be made between an Authority that acts with a visible design to destroy Religion, and another that intends to protect it, but that errs in its conduct, and does often restrain the Rules of Order, and impose hard and uneasy things: Certainly in the latter much is to be born with, that may be otherwise uneasy, because the main is still safe; and private slips when endured and submitted to, can never be compared to those public disorders, that a rigid maintaining of that which is perhaps in it self good,

must occasion. But when the design is plain, and that the Conduct of the Civil Powers goes against the Truth of Religion, either in whole, or in any main Article of it, then the Body of the Christians of that State, ought to fortify themselves, by maintaining their Order, and their other Rules, in so far as they are necessary to their preservation.

Upon the whole matter, it does not appear that the Church has any Authority to act in opposition to the State, but merely in those things in which the Religion that she professes is plain and positive; so that the Question comes to be really this, *Whether is it better to obey God, than Man?* There, the Rule is clear, and the Decision is soon made: So when the Church acts merely in obedience to the Rules and Laws laid down in Scripture, such as, in declaring the Doctrine, in administering the Sacraments, and maintaining the settled Officers of the Church, she is upon a sure Bottom, and must cast her self upon the Providence of God, whatever may happen, and still obey God; but in all things that have arisen out of ancient Customs and Canons, in every thing

thing where she has not a Law of God to support her, I do not see any Power she has to act in opposition to Law, and to the Supreme Civil Authority.

In this the constant practice of the Jews is no small Argument: whose *Sanhedrin*, that was a Civil Court, and the Head of their State, did give Rules and Orders, which their Priests were bound to obey, when not contrary to the Law of God. We are sure this was the Rule in our Saviour's time; and it was never censured nor reproved by him, nor by the Apostles: The Argument is also strong, that is drawn from the constant practice of the Church, from the time that she first had the protection of the Civil Authority, till the times of the Papal Domination, in which we find, the Emperors all along making Laws concerning all the Administrations of the Church: we find them receiving Appeals in all Church matters, which they appointed such Bishops as hapned to be about their Courts, to examine; this was like our Court of Delegates; for the Bishops, who judged those matters, did not act according to Canon, or by the Ecclesiastical Authority, which had put



the Church in a stated line of Subordination, according to the division of the Provinces of the Empire : They acted only by an Imperial Authority ; so that though they were Bishops , they acted by the Emperor's Commission. Such Authorities as these, drawn from the practices of the *Jewish* and the Primitive Church, are at least strong Inducements to believe this to be true. But the Argument that seems to determine it, is, That Men cannot be obliged to obey two different Authorities, that may happen to contradict one another ; this were a strange distraction in Mens Thoughts and Consciences , and therefore it cannot be supposed that God has put them under such a divided Authority ; for all Temporals will easily be fetched within an *in ordine ad spiritualia*. Since then every Soul is bound under the hazard of damnation to obey the Supreme Powers, we must be bound to obey their Laws in every thing that is not contrary to the Law of God ; which seems to be the only Limitation that this can admit of. That settles this whole matter, which otherwise must be ravelled out into vast Intricacies ; and yet it must be supposed for

for certain, that the Rule for Mens obedience must be distinct and fixed.

To conclude this whole matter ; The best and surest way for preserving the Order and Authority of the Church, as well as its Peace and Prosperity, is for the Clergy to live and labour so, to be so humble and modest, so self-denied and heavenly-minded, that from thence the *Laity* may be brought to see, that whatsoever Power they have, will be employed for the Publick good of the whole. This will make them to be less jealous, and more submissive; and this will secure to them, most commonly, the protection and encouragement which they may expect from the *Civil Powers*; who will be apt to have regard to their Clergy, according to the esteem which they observe their other Subjects have for them.

# THE HISTORY OF THE

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## DISCOURSE IV.

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Concerning the

# OBLIGATIONS

To continue in the

## COMMUNION of the CHURCH.

**T**HERE is nothing that concerns the Peace and Order of Churches, and indeed the quiet and good government of Mankind more, than rightly to understand our Obligations to continue in the Communion of that Church in which we were born, or which is the main Body of that Sociey of Christians among whom we live. The extreame in this matter are dangerous on both hands. A lazy Compliance with every thing that is uppermost, because of the Law and Advantages that may  
be



be on its side ; and an implicate believing and receiving of every thing that happens to be proposed to us, does on the one hand depress our Faculties, renders us so easy to every Form in Religion, that we become at last indifferent to all, and concerned in none ; it makes way for tyranny in those that govern, and sinks those that are governed into a sottish stupidity. On the other hand, a wanton cavilling at every thing, the breaking of an Established Order, the making Divisions, and the drawing of Parties, the quarrelling about nicer points of speculation, or some lesser matters in Rituals, do occasion much passion and animosity, they take men much off from the great ends of Religion, they divide Christians from one another, and sharpen them against one another ; all which are Evils of so high a nature in themselves, and in their Consequences, that it will be of great advantage to find so true a mean in this matter, that in it we may avoid the mischiefs of both extreams.

The foundation then to be laid here, is first, to consider the natural obligation that all men, who are united by any common Bond, come under to maintain a cordial

cordial affection, and a mutual good understanding among themselves ; both as it is an instrument to preserve and strengthen their Body, and as it makes such a Body of men easy and happy. But this, that is a consideration common to all joint Bodies of men, becomes much stronger in the Christian Religion ; one of its main designs being to knit mens hearts to one another, by a tenderness of *brotherly kindness and charity* : Our Saviour having made this the distinction, *by which all the world might know who were his disciples,* <sup>13. John 35.</sup> and who were not so. And all his Apostles, have in every one of their Epistles, not excepting the shortest, prest this in such a variety of copious and most earnest Directions, that whosoever reads the *New Testament* carefully, must see that this is enlarged on beyond all the other Duties of our Religion, and prest in the most comprehensive words, and with the most enforcing considerations possible. The chief of all being the love which our Saviour himself bare to us ; in imitation of which, he has required us *to love one another, to love enemies, to pass by, and to forgive injuries, doing good for evil ;*

*evil*; to relieve the necessitous, and have bowels of compassion for all men.

This is a main part of the glory, as well as of the duties of our Religion. To advance this, and to endear us to one another, we are obliged to pray with, and for one another; we are bound to assemble our selves together, that by our seeing of one another, and meeting in the same Acts and Duties of Religion, our love and union may become stronger, and more firmly cemented. Sacraments are sacred Rites, instituted not only to maintain our Devotion towards God, as Acts of Homage and Solemn Vows made to him, but likewise as Bonds to knit us together, as well as to unite us to our Head: And it is no small confirmation of all this, that our Saviour in his last and longest Prayer to the Father, when he was interceding for his Church, has repeated this Prayer so often, no less than five times, in no very long Prayer, that *they might be one, and be kept and made perfect in one*; and the Unity prayed for is so sublime, that it is compared to that Unconceivable Unity or Union that was between the Father and the Son; and by this the World was to be convinced of the truth

17. St. Joh

verses 11,

21, 22, 23.

truth of his Religion, *That the world* Verse 23.  
*might believe that the father had sent*  
*him.*

More needs not be said upon this Head to make it evident, that it is of the greatest importance to the Christian Religion, to maintain an entire union among its Members; and that the chief mean of doing this, is their uniting themselves in the same Acts of Worship. Now the only Question that will remain, will be, How far must this go? and the only Answer that can be made to it, is, That it must go, till the Body, in which we happen to be engaged, imposes unlawful terms of Communion on its Members: In that case we must remember, that *it is better to obey God than man*; and that we must *seek peace and truth*; since an Union on unlawful terms is a combination against God and his Truth, and is no piece of Christian Charity. This will be agreed to on all hands in the general. So I will go next to examine the Pretences for disjointing this Union among our selves, and see whether the main Body among us, I mean our Church, has imposed unlawful terms of Communion on her Members; for if that is true,  
we



we by so doing have broke this Union: or whether any who have separated from us, have not done it upon less binding Considerations, for then they have broken the Union.

This I will manage with all possible fairness, and without the least reflection on Persons and Parties. I will state their grounds, and put their Arguments, with the utmost force that I can apprehend belongs to them; and when I have weighed them, I will leave the whole matter to an Impartial consideration. The first point, in which every man must fix his thoughts, is, that it is not free to him to chuse to which Body he will join himself, as it is free to him to chuse in which Parish he will settle himself; for since all Parishes make but one Communion and Church, the one cannot be compared to the other: And if all that was said before, is true, then certainly it is not lawful for any man to break the Union of the Body, unless he is persuaded that it cannot be maintained but upon unlawful terms. Therefore except a man is under this persuasion, he sins if he departs from the Union of the Body. But since *Conscience* is a word that may be used in the  
fol-

following parts of this Discourse, its true notion ought to be well settled ; which is, according to the natural signification of the word, in all Languages, *an inward persuasion, founded upon some reason, apprehended to be true, concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing.* By this it will appear, that a bare aversion or dislike to a thing, without any reason on which that dislike is grounded, cannot be called *Conscience* ; since things with which we are not acquainted, or that are uncouth to us, which we have often heard spoken against, are disliked by us, through a habit or prejudice conceived against them : but unless this is founded upon some reason, that appears to us true, drawn either from the nature of things, or from the Scriptures, it is not *Conscience*. I do not say, that every man under these Convictions must be able to maintain those his Reasons to others, to be just and good ; for then a better Arguer, who can silence him, should be able to alter his *Conscience* : But though he cannot answer Objections, yet as long as his Persuasion appears to be well grounded to himself, such a man is still under the bonds of his *Conscience*. I am  
not

not now to examine how far an erring Conscience obliges, or at least excuses: It is enough to have stated in general the true Notion of *Conscience*, by which every man that does not intend to deceive himself, may certainly know, whether he is really under the persuasions of Conscience, or if he is only guided by Humour, Conceit, or the power of Education and Prejudice.

The main Foundation out of which most of the Objections against some of the Terms of our Communion are rais'd, is this, 'That the Church is only 'empower'd to execute those Rules and 'Orders that are set Christians in the 'Scriptures: That the pretending to 'add to these, is to accuse the Scripture as defective; That all Additions 'to those Rules set us in Scripture, are 'Superstitious Usages: That they impose a yoke upon us, and so deprive 'us of our Christian Liberty; That if 'some Rites may be added, others upon 'the like reasons may be also added to 'these, and so on without bounds: as 'in Fact it appears; That when the 'Church went once off from the first 'simplicity, in which the Apostles deliver'd

' liver'd the Christian Religion to the  
 ' World; and that new Rites were in-  
 ' vented to beautify the Worship: these  
 ' Additions did at last swell up to that  
 ' intollerable height, in which they are  
 ' now in the Church of *Rome*. In Re-  
 ' ligious Matters, it is not enough, ac-  
 ' cording to St. *Paul's* Rule, that a thing  
 ' is *lawful*, it must also be *expedient*: 1 Cor. 10.  
 ' but for that pretended expediency <sup>23</sup>.  
 ' which is alledged for some Rites,  
 ' that they are expressive and signifi-  
 ' cant; it is rather an Argument a-  
 ' gainst them; for a significant Ceremo-  
 ' ny is of the nature of a Sacrament,  
 ' The common definition of which,  
 ' that it is a *visible sign of an invisible Grace*  
 ' agreeing to it; and certainly the  
 ' appointing Sacraments is above the  
 ' power of the Church, and can belong  
 ' only to *Jesus Christ*, who is its Head  
 ' and Founder. But all this is in ap-  
 ' pearance the stronger, if Rites so en-  
 ' join'd have been abus'd to Idolatry,  
 ' and are parts of an Idolatrous Wor-  
 ' ship: To retain these, is to conform  
 ' our selves to it; tho the Scriptures  
 ' command us to come out from among  
 ' all such, and not to be conformable to  
 T                      ' them.



2 Kings

18. 4

14. Rom.

13.

V. 23.

' them. *Hezekiah* broke the *Brazen Ser-*  
 ' *pent*, tho a Memorial of a signal Mi-  
 ' racle, in which it had been in some  
 ' sort an Instrument; yet when even  
 ' that was abus'd to Idolatry, a good  
 ' King broke it to pieces. This will hold  
 ' stronger against things that are but of  
 ' human Institution, That they ought  
 ' to be taken away, how innocent soe-  
 ' ver they may be in themselves, after  
 ' they are grossly abus'd. To keep up  
 ' the use of such things, is to scandalize  
 ' and offend the weaker Christians, tho  
 ' *St. Paul* lays great weight upon this,  
 ' and charges all Christians *not to lay a*  
 ' *stumbling-block in one anothers way*; he  
 ' calls the doing otherwise, *the destroying*  
 ' *a weak Brother*; and in conclusion, since  
 ' *St. Paul* said, *whatsoever is not of faith,*  
 ' *is sin*: these Rites therefore not being  
 ' warranted from Scripture, cannot be of  
 ' *Faith*, the Object of which is a Divine  
 ' Revelation; they must therefore be sin-  
 ' ful.

And thus I have set down all the  
 Branches of the Plea against Ceremonies,  
 with as much advantage as I can imagine  
 belongs to them. I go therefore in the  
 next place to take it to pieces, and  
 to

to examine the strength of the whole, and of every part of this Reasoning, that, as must be acknowledg'd, wants not fair and specious colours.

The main stress lies upon this, Whether the Church in her Rituals is so limited to the Scriptures, that she has no power to add any thing to what is prescribed in them? Great difference is to be made between matters of Doctrine, Rules of Life, Federal Acts, together with the other Acts of Worship which are parts of the *New Covenant*, or conditions of it; and some Ritual Appointments, such as the Circumstances of those Instituted Acts, the forms for the Solemn Acts of Worship, together with some other Institutions which are helps to Devotion, and do fix or raise the attention. For the former sort, it is confess'd, That Christ and his Apostles having deliver'd this Religion to the World, it must continue in the same state in which they settled it, without additions or variations: but since all instituted Actions must be determined by the Circumstances of persons, places, times, words and postures, these must be all manag'd with such Decency and Beauty, as may carry

on the Order and Edification of the Church ; and since some Actions seem to have a very natural tendency to give good Impressions, and to raise a seriousness and awe for Divine Performances, these may be also appointed by those who are to *feed, teach* and *guide* their people.

We see the *Jews*, tho their Religion seems to have in it a sufficient share of Rituals, did add a great many Ceremonies to those which *Moses* gave them. They had in their Paschal-Supper a thick sawce of Dates, Almonds, and Figs, pounded together, and wrought up into the form of Clay, to remember them of the Clay of which their Fathers had made Bricks in the Land of *Ægypt* ; and yet our Saviour observ'd his Paschal-Supper with the same addition : for this was probably the sawce into which *Judas* dipt the Sop. They had likewise a form of Initiating Profelytes into their Religion by Baptism, not mention'd in the *Old Testament* ; and after their Paschal-Supper, the Table was spread a second time, and nothing but Bread and Wine was set on it : yet tho these two last mention'd were Rites added by them to the

the Divine Institution, our Saviour was so far from condemning them for those additions, that he took these, and hallow'd them to be the two *Fœderal* Rites of his own Religion: Nor does he so much blame the *Pharisees* for the observation of those Rites which Tradition had handed down to them, as because they set that value on them, as to make the Laws of God of no effect upon their account, when those voluntary assum'd Ceremonies were prefer'd by them to the Moral Law it self; so that the over-valuing of Rituals, and the imagining that by them Compensation can be made to God for the weightier Matters of the Law, Faith, Justice, and the Love of God, is indeed severely reprimanded by our Saviour: but the bare observance of them is nowhere censur'd by him. On the contrary, The whole service of the Synagogues was only a human Institution; no print of any Divine Precept appearing for it in the whole *Old Testament*: yet our Saviour came to their Synagogues, and bore a share in the Acts of Worship that were perform'd there. A Feast was Instituted by the *Maccabees*, in commemoration of their having purg'd the



Temple from Idolatry, which was observ'd by our Saviour; and the whole *New Testament* is full of allusions to some Forms and Rites which were then practised by the *Jews* in their Worship, tho no where instituted in the *Old Testament*.

15. A.  
29.

There are also some Precepts given in the *New Testament* about Ritual Matters, which are now taken away only by disuse; that is, by the Authority of the Church that has discontinu'd the practice of them: such is the Decree that the Apostles with the rest at *Jerusalem* made against the eating of *meats strangled, or offered to Idols, or of blood*; which as they are join'd with *Fornication*, so the prohibition of them is reckon'd among *necessary things*; yet these are now no more consider'd, as forbidden: that prohibition being lookt on either as a compliance with the *Jews*, in those precepts which they believe were given to the Sons of *Noah*; or as a direction to keep the Christians at a due distance from all compliances with the *Gentiles* in their Idolatrous practises. And now that all regards to the *Jews* have ceased with God's rejecting them from being

being his people, at the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and all danger of coming too near the practises of the *Gentiles*, is likewise at an end, we living no more among *Heathenish Idolaters*; the nature of the things prohibited by that Decree, not being evil in themselves, when the ground of the Prohibition ceases, all men reckon that the Prohibition must be at an end. Here then the Authority and Practise of the Church seems to be strong, even in bar to an Apostolical Decree; and none of those Bodies that are offended at our Rituals, have revived this: So at least this Argument is of force against those who do it not; for certainly a greater degree of Authority is necessary to take away a practise that has the face of a plain Commandment in Scripture enjoining it, than for adding such Rites as are recommended by new Emergencies. To this may be added the Practise and Rules given by the Apostles concerning Deaconesses: *Phæbe* and others are mention'd that serv'd in that Function. St. *Paul* also in the Rules that he gives concerning the Age, the Qualifications and the Functions of the *Widows*, seems plainly to

16. Rom. 1.

mean 1 Tim. 5.  
9.

mean them : and we do certainly know, that they were in the first Ages of Christianity, and were imploy'd in the Instruction, and about the Baptism of such women as were converted to the Faith. But when afterwards some Scandals rose upon them, as the Council of *Nice* prohibited the Clergy to keep any women that were not very nearly related to them, in their houses ; so in the Fifth Century upon some publick Scandals given by them, we find, that as they were put down in the Western Church by several Provincial Synods, so they insensibly wore out of the *Greek Church* ; and yet none in our days have endeavour'd to revive this Institution. The *kiss of peace* was likewise us'd in the Apostles times, and is mention'd in their Epistles ; yet that Rite being perhaps made use of by prophane Scoffers, to represent the Assemblies of the Christians as too licentious, for the black and unjust Imputations cast on their Meetings seem to have no other Foundation but this, it wore out of practice : and I do not hear that any in our days have endeavour'd to bring it again in use. We see likewise, that they had *Love-feasts* before

1 Pet. 5.

14.

16. Rom.

16.

1 Cor. 16.

20.

2 Cor. 13.

12.

1 Cor. 11.

31.

before the Eucharist, which was taken from the *Jews*; and tho *St. Paul* complains of some abuses in this practice, he does not condemn it, nor order it to be let fall; yet it wore out, and is not now offer'd to be reviv'd by any among us. Thus we see, that as to Matters that are expressly mention'd in Scripture, with warrants that seem to impose them as standing Rules upon succeeding Ages; the abuses or unsuitness which afterwards appear'd in them, were thought sufficient Reasons for departing from them.

To these Instances another may be added, that must needs press all that differ from us, one Body only excepted, very much. We know that the first Ritual of Baptism, was by going into the Waters, and being laid as dead backwards all-along in them; and then the persons baptized were rais'd up again, and so they came out of them. This is not only mention'd by *St. Paul*, but in two different places he gives a Mystical Signification of this Rite; that it signified our being *buried with Christ in* 6. Rom. *Baptism*, and our *being raised up with him* 3.4.5. *to a new life*; so that the Phrases of *rising* 2.Col. 12.



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*rising with Christ*, and of *putting on Christ*, as oft as they occur, do plainly relate to this : and yet partly out of modesty, partly in regard to the tenderness of Infants, and the coldness of these Climates, since such a manner might endanger their lives, and we know that *God loves mercy better than sacrifice*, this form of baptising is as little used by those who separate from us, as by our selves.

13. John  
14, 15.

If we consider only the words of the Scripture, without regarding the subsequent practice of the Church, we see reason enough to imagine, that the washing of feet should be kept up in the Church. We have our Saviour's practice for it, and words that seem to import an obligation on us to *wash one another's feet*, together with the moral use and signification of it, that it ought to teach us Humility. From all these things this Inference seems just, That according to the practices of those who divide from us, the Church must be suppos'd to have an Authority to adjust the forms of our Religion, in those parts of them that are meerly Ritual, to the Taste, to the Exigencies and Conveniencies of the several Ages and

and Climates. I say in things that are meerly *Ritual*; for I do not think that these. Instances can justify a Church that should alter any main part of a Federal Rite instituted by Christ: such as the giving the Chalice in the Sacrament; since this Institution is deliver'd with so particular a Solemnity, and in express words is appointed to be continu'd *till Christ's second coming*; and the Cup is given as a Seal of the *New Covenant in his blood, for the remission of sins*; which therefore all are requir'd to *drink*.

We are to consider, that in matters that are meerly Ritual, unless we suppose that Charms are ti'd to particular Rites, there could be no other design in them, but to secure some good purpose, or to keep off some bad practice by those outworks: If then the state of Mankind does so alter, that what is good in one Age, is liable to abuse, mistake or superstition in another; there must be suppos'd to be a power in the Pastors of the Church, to alter or add as they see real occasions or good warrants for it. Outward appearances work much on Mankind; things that look light, must dissipate men's Thoughts, as much  
as



14. Rom.  
19.  
1 Cor. 14.  
26, 40.

as graver methods do recollect them. Dancing in the praises of God, would look very wild now ; but in other Ages it had a better effect. Since therefore the Christian Religion was to last to the end of the World, and to be spread to very different Climates ; and since there is no special Rubrick of forms digested in it ; since there is also no Limitation put upon the Church in this point, but rules are given that sound very much to the contrary, of doing all things that tend to *Order, Edification and Peace* ; this great prejudice seems to be fully taken off and answer'd.

Nor do such Institutions lead to *Superstition*, but rather to the contrary. *Superstition* in its strict Notion is a baseness of mind, that makes us fear without cause, and over-value things too much ; imagining that there is more in them than really there is. If things that are ritual were unalterable, there might be from thence more occasion given to Superstition, according to the conceit of the *Jews*, who thinking that their Rites were unalterable, came to fancy from thence, that there was a real value in them, which upon their own account

account render'd men the more acceptable to God : Superstition is more effectually beat down by the opinion of the alterableness of all external forms, according to the different Exigencies of times and places ; since this shews, that Rites are only matters of Order and Decency, which have no real value in them, because they are alterable. If any grow superstitious in the observance of them, this is an abuse to which all things, even the most Sacred, the Sacraments themselves, are liable.

It can as little be said, That these Rules in Ritual Matters are Impositions on our *Christian Liberty* ; they are rather the exercise of a main part of it, which is our not being tied up so strictly by a *Law of Commandments*, as the *Jews* were. The Notion of *Liberty*, as it is stated by St. *Paul*, is the Exemption under which Christians were brought from the Precepts of the *Mosaical Law* : for those who asserted the standing Obligations of that Law, were bringing Christians under a heavy Yoke, in opposition to which, the Apostles asserted their *Liberty*. But it is likewise a true piece of *Liberty*, and a very necessary

necessary one for the Societies of Christians, to have among them a power of using or forbearing to use, such external things, as do either advance or obstruct the main ends of Religion. That some Churches may abuse, and that others have abused this Authority by carrying it too far, and imposing too great a load of external performances, is not to be denied: The number of them may become a vast burden, and a distraction rather than a help towards the main Design of Religion. Ludicrous Rites begets prophaneness, and Pompous ones an undue gaiety: But the apprehension of an abuse in the extent of an Authority, cannot justify the quarrelling at a few Rites, when it is visible there is no disposition to swell or encrease them. If every year were producing some new Rite or other, there might be good ground to fear, that there would be no end of such Impositions; but this cannot be appli'd to our Circumstances. It is also a question, whether in case that there were indeed too many Rites enjoin'd, every one of which were innocent in it self, so that no special Objection lay against any one, but against them all,

all, as too many; whether, I say, in such a case, private persons were not oblig'd rather to bear their burden, than by shaking it off, to rend the Body, and disturb the Peace and Order of the Church? It seems they ought rather to bear it: The Rulers of a Church have indeed much to answer for, who press her too hard, with burdens that are both useless and heavy to be born; but the obligations to Peace seem to counter-balance this inexpediency. For tho' private persons must judge for themselves, whether things requir'd of them are *lawful* or *unlawful*, and must act accordingly; yet *Expediency* or *Inexpediency* is only to take place, in cases in which they are entirely at their own disposal, and where the rules of Prudence or Charity can only determine them. But where the quiet and order of the Body is concern'd, Publick orders and determinations being interpos'd, they are not to depart from those, upon their conceiving them inexpedient; for it is certainly more inexpedient and mischievous to break Publick Order, than it can possibly be to practice any Rite, which perhaps if left free to us, might seem not expedient,  
and



and were better let alone. The expediency of Forms and Rites is a very proper Subject of publick Consultations; and those who are concern'd in them, will have much to answer for to God if they do not weigh this, together with all that counterbalances it, very critically : but in a settled state of things, exceptions to the expediency of them can never justify the interrupting the Order and Quiet of the Society.

One of the chief of these Expediencies is, that those Rites have a real tendency to make good Impressions on peoples minds ; that they put those who practise them in mind of their duty ; so that there is some good signification in them. The objection against *Significant Ceremonies*, as being of the nature of Sacraments, will appear to be founded on a great mistake : If we state a little the difference between the signifying or expressing some part of our duty, with such proper acts of our minds as do become the occasion, and the signifying some blessing that is offered or conveyed to us by God, in the use of that Action ; The former is far from the nature of a *Sacrament* ; and indeed is only a mute way

way of speaking : For actions as well as words may become instituted Signs to express our thoughts. But indeed if we should fancy, that such Rites did offer or convey into our minds those things that are signifi'd by them, as a federal Institution, to which a Divine Vertue were annexed, this were to consider them as Sacraments ; the Institution of which is unquestionably beyond the power of the Church : but it is quite another thing, when Rites are appointed as means only to raise in our minds suitable and corresponding thoughts.

To instance this in one particular ; If we pretended that by the use of the *Cross in Baptism*, a divine vertue were conveyed to the Person baptized, that deadned him more entirely to the World, and wrought him up to a greater conformity to Christ ; then here were a new *Sacrament* set up, which could not be justified : But when it is only meant, as an exhibiting the form of the Cross of Christ, to put us in mind of our obligation to imitate him, and to suffer for him ; here is only a Rite that speaks to us in an Action, which is explained by the words that accompany it.

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It is more important which is urged from the abuse of Rites to Idolatrous Practices : This was the first objection that was started among us against the *Habits* in the Worship of God ; and had without doubt a very plausible appearance ; since a great part of the *Mosaical* Law seemed to be the establishing many Rites, merely to put them in a great opposition to the *Gentiles*, and to set them at the vastest distance possible from their Idolatrous or Magical Practices : Yet at the same time many others of those Instituted Rites, are by some very Learned Men proved to have been taken from other Practices of the same Idolaters, that were more innocent in themselves, tho abused, as the rest of their Rites were, to Idolatry. The *Jews* had certainly very much corrupted their Religion by the addition of many Rites, and by their overvaluing those Additions : And yet two of these were made use of by our Saviour to be the Sacraments of his Church. But besides this, a great difference is to be made between Rites that were in their first use invented for the pomp of Idolatry, and were in their first use applied to it ; and those which had  
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been in use long before those Idolatrous Practises begun, and were afterwards applied to them. In these last, if their abuse is taken away, and the first and simple usage is revived, this seems to be no compliance with either Idolatry or Superstition. To go on with the former Instance; we find the Primitive Christians used the making a Cross in the Air, or upon their Bodies on many occasions; afterwards, when a Divine Vertue was fancied to accompany that Ritual Action, it was used in Baptism as a sort of Incantation; for with the use of it, *the Devil was adjured* to go out of the person that was to be baptized; such an usage made it a Sacramental and a Superstitious Action; and if it had been still retained in that form, as it was in the first Reformation of our Liturgy in King *Edward* the VIth's time, I do not see how it could have been justified; but since it had been an ancient form to use the Sign of the Cross, the Church might well have retained this in some of her Rites; and it belonged to none of them so properly, as to the Initiatory Sacrament, in which the first use of it was retained, and the succeeding abuse was laid aside. Since



also we find that the Primitive Christians received the other Sacrament in the posture in which they prayed to God ; and since the posture in which all our Prayers are now made, is *kneeling*, it might be very proper to go through this whole Office, from beginning to end, in the posture of Prayer: But this could not be so well excused if the posture were left free till the Consecration ; and if then only *kneeling* were required, this were indeed to continue a practise that had been abused by Idolatry, which could not be justified: So that the abuse of Forms may require the altering them from that method in which they were abused, but cannot import an obligation to abstain wholly from the use of them in another method. It may be a very just matter for a publick deliberation, whether such things ought to be retained, they being freed from such Abuses, or not. On the one hand, The People who are apt to be much struck with a total change of outward Forms, especially when that is suddenly made, may be more easily brought about, if the Alterations are not too sensible, but that some things seem to remain, to which they had been accustomed,

stomed, and for which they retained a value. Now since Mankind is so weak, that some lesser Frailties ought to be indulged, while more Criminal ones are not to be spared, here was a very specious ground to persuade the continuance of those Rites; and that the rather, because we find the Apostles themselves complied with the *Jews* in Instances of a much higher nature.

They circumcised some; they observed *Jewish* Rites, and to the *Jews* they became *Jews*, as they became *all things to all men*. 16. Acts 3. 21. Acts 24. 1 Cor. 9. 20. St. Paul took vows on him, and went to the Temple to be purifi'd, which could not be done but with a *Sacrifice*: And though he still stood upon the exemption of the *Gentiles* from the obligations of their Law; yet he himself, together with other born *Jews*, complied with them in their Observances. Now when it is considered, that these were typical Laws that were accomplished by the coming of our Saviour, and that the *Jews* pleaded still for the continuance of them, so that it was indeed the main controversy of that time; it will appear, that the compliance of the Apostles in such things, was liable to much juster

Objections than any that can be brought against obedience to Constitutions, that are about things of their own nature innocent and indifferent. But yet we see the Apostles judged, that as long as the Temple stood, and that God's Wrath was not yet poured out on that Nation, there were still some among them, that as a *remnant* were to be gained to Christianity; and therefore while there was ground to hope for that, they went on in that condescension to their infirmity, observing that very Law which was then maintained by the *Jews* with the highest insolence and cruelty possible against Christ and his Followers. When this Point is well weighed in its full extent, and in all its consequences, it will, I hope, satisfy many, how far so great an end as the publick Peace, and the edification of the whole Body, ought to be pursued, when the Apostles went so far in order to the gaining of a few.

And here it will be no impertinent digression, to observe the Rules that *St. Paul* lays down to Christians in this whole matter: I cannot think that it was so fully opened in Epistles that have been preserved down to our days, as a  
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main part of the Canon of our Faith, without a special Providence of God, that in those Rules we might see our own duty in the management of such Controversies as should afterwards arise : Since besides a historical knowledge of the state of that time, this is all the use that it seems we can now make of such long Discourses, and Arguings ; and if this can be well stated, it will be a sure thread to guide us.

First then, *St. Paul* leads men above the valuing such matters too much ; as if the being of the one or the other side, signified any thing towards their peace with God : For all fierce Zealots are apt to imagine, that by their zeal they please God, and atone for great faults. Therefore to take away that false Conceit, this is often repeated, That in *Christ Jesus* neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed any thing, but a new creature, or faith which worketh by love, and the keeping the commandments of God ; and that the Christian Religion, or the Kingdom of God consisted not in meat and drink, that is, in Rituals, concerning the distinction of Meats clean and unclean,

5. Gal. 6.

6. Gal. 15.

14. Rom.

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- V. 12. but in much higher things, *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* : And he seems to assert, that whosoever served Christ in these things, *was acceptable to God, and ought to be approved of men* ; whatsoever his sense might be as to all other things.

Another Position laid down, is, That every man ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind ; to have clear Principles, and to frame these into as distinct Rules as possibly he could : And this is the meaning, of *doing all things in faith* ; which word signifies *persuasion*, and ought to have been so rendered here : And then all those difficulties that arise out of the misunderstanding of that word, would cease ; so that the paraphrase of those so often-cited words will run thus. *Hast thou a persuasion ? have it within thy self ; so that thou mayst appeal to God upon it : For happy is the man that is so settled, that he does not waver in a distraction of thoughts ; sometimes approving, and at other times condemning the same thing ; for while a man is still doubting, he is condemned within himself.* For instance, If he eats freely of all Meats, without regarding the Jewish distinctions, and yet has within him

him an opinion of the obligatory force of those Laws, he does not act upon clear Principles and Persuasions; for while a man acts without these, not knowing but that he may be sinning against God, he does then really sin, since he does things which he thinks are sins, so that they become sins to him. This is a plain account of those words, which as it agrees exactly to their natural signification, so it shuts out all the difficulties which arise out of them. For the word rendred by *doubting*, according to the sense in which it stands in all the other parts of the *New Testament*, signifies the *making distinction*; so that the meaning of it is, *He who thinks that there is still a distinction between meats clean and unclean, is very guilty if he eats as long as he is under that persuasion.*

A third Rule laid down by St. Paul, is, That in all such matters, men ought not to assume an Authority to judge others; that is, to impose things upon them, as if they had a Judiciary Authority over them. *Let not man judge you* 2. Coll. i. 6. *in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day:* that is, Let no man in matters left at liberty, pretend to an authority over

over another ; for God is the sole Judge of all men : And let no man *judge* his Brother, that is, offer to call him to an account of his Actions ; *for we must all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ*, where he who is our only Judge, as a Law-giver, will then be our *Judge*, by calling us to an account of our Actions : Upon this follow the Rules of mens deportment towards one another. Those that have larger Principles, and higher Notions ; who in that respect are *stranger*, and who by that freedom of mind and thought, did eat without those nice distinctions of clean and unclean, ought not to despise such as were yet fearful and straitned in their thoughts, and durst not emancipate themselves, as if they were men of low thoughts, and narrow minds : On the other hand, Those who were still entangled with an opinion of the obligation of the *Mosaical* Law, ought not to condemn such as acted with more freedom, as if they were loose and lawless men.

To this a fourth Assertion is added, That in such diversities of apprehensions, men of both sides might be received and accepted by God ; both acting with good

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Intentions, and following sincerely their Persuasions. *One man regarded a day :* 14. Rom. He observed the *Jewish* Festivities, their <sup>6.</sup> New Moons, and days of rest, called by the general word of *Sabbaths*; yet in doing this, under the sense of the Obligations of that Law lying still over him, *he regarded it to the Lord*: Another, who reckoned himself freed from that Yoke, did acknowledge, that this his Liberty was occasioned by the Christian Religion; so he, in not observing it, acknowledged that Religion which had set him free. The same Rule is also instanced in observing the distinction of Meats; the one did eat freely, and thanked God for that liberty; while the other did abstain from forbidden Meats, and thanked God for that Law by which the *Jewish* Nation had so many special Privileges beyond all other Nations; so that God was honoured by both, even in all that diversity of practises: And perhaps, a diversity of practises, if with that, a tender and perfect Charity could be maintained, might be yet a greater honour to Religion, than an absolute agreement in all points; since it is a higher Instance of the power of Religion, if  
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men can love one another, notwithstanding a diversity in opinion and practise; than if they loved one another, being in all points of the same mind, and agreeing in the same practises.

V. 13. After these, came two Rules relating to private mens behaviour towards one another in such cases: The one is, *not to set a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in another man's way*; that is, not to use our liberty in such instances, or on such occasions, as may draw other men to act in imitation of us, against their own Consciences. This is the true notion of *giving scandal*, or *the laying a trap* in the way of another, by which he may fall, or be caught: And this every man is to avoid, When it is free for him to act, or not, as he pleases; for in that case only, he is under this obligation and caution; since otherwise, if he is determined by any Law, Divine or Human, he must go on and do his duty, without considering what consequences may happen upon it; for which he is not accountable, since he is not at liberty to dispose of himself, but is concluded by a higher Authority. The other Rule is, That we ought, as much as may be, to avoid doing

doing any thing that may grieve other *Christians*, which is said to be walking *uncharitably*; since we ought to have such regard, even to the tenderness and weakness of our Brethren, as not to do such things as may wound or trouble them, still under the former supposition, that we are fully at our own liberty, and under no law nor obligation to the contrary.

These are the Rules laid down by *St. Paul*; which, when well considered, and rightly understood, will give a great light into this whole Controversy. By these it will appear, that even the Apostles themselves, who might have assumed a higher strain of Authority, yet had great regards to the frailties of those they governed: And although most of these Positions and Rules do suppose men to be in a state of an unrestrained liberty, so that they do not belong to our case, in which Laws and Constitutions have already determined us; yet they ought still to have great weight with those that are not concluded by Laws, and all such as may have the making or reviewing of Laws under their care and deliberation.

But I have opened this matter more fully than was, perhaps, necessary to my present

present purpose, which only required, that I should clear some Passages in Saint Paul's Epistles that are applied to the Points now under examination, though they do not at all belong to them; since all that is in St. Paul, relates only to such things as were entirely left to mens own liberty, and in which it was free to them to act which way soever they pleased; which are not at all applicable to established Rules, settled by Law, and recommended by Ancient practise. It is true, that no Age of the Church since the Apostles days, can make Laws for succeeding Ages; since the Pastors of every Age have the same Authority that the Pastors of any precedent Age had after the times of Inspiration: Whatever was done in a former Age, may be altered in a subsequent one: And therefore all those Rules, of the subordination of Churches one to another, being taken from the disposition of the *Roman Empire*, *Europe* being now totally moulded into another frame, are now at the discretion of Princes to continue or change them at their pleasure: And all the Rituals of the Church are in the power of every Age to alter or continue them as they shall

shall see cause; but till they are altered, they bind; not by reason of any Authority that former Ages had over the present; but because the present Age, by not repealing former Rules and Canons, does tacitly and interpretatively confirm and renew them: For if the Pastors of the present Age, in concurrence with, and a due subordination to the Civil Powers, have an Authority to make Laws or Canons in such matters, they have likewise a power to continue such as were made in any former Age, and they are presumed, and in Law taken to do that, till they repeal them.

I have now gone through the general Plea that is brought against our Constitutions from general Topicks; and have, I hope, shewed that there is no force in any part of it. I come next to consider such things as are objected more specially to several particulars in our Constitution.

They except to the Government of the Church, because of the different Ranks of *Bishop*, *Priest* and *Deacon*; whereas the Scriptures use *Bishop* and *Priest* so promiscuously, that from thence it seems reasonable to infer, that they are  
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one and the same Function, and that there ought to be but two Ranks, *Bishop* and *Deacon* in the Church. But those who object this, have really among them but one Function or Order; since they have no *Deacons* in the sense of St. Paul's Epistles, who are a Degree of men dedicated to the Service of God, out of which, as any served well in it, they were advanced to a superior Degree, and were ever esteemed a Sacred Order of men. There are none such among those who urge this matter against us. The promiscuous use of Names does not prove the Offices the same. The Apostles are called sometimes *Deacons* or *Ministers*, and so are their Companions in labour; for the term *Deacon* signifying any one that ministered, it was not then appropriated to the lowest Order, no more than *Presbyter* was to the second; for the Apostles call themselves sometimes *Deacons*; so that from hence an Argument might be drawn, as well to prove that *Deacons* are equal in Rank to the highest Order of *Bishops*. We plainly see, that God settled three Orders of Officers in the Jewish Temple: We see also in their Synagogues that there were three different Ranks,  
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1 Cor. 3. 5.

2 Cor. 3. 6.

&amp; 6. 4.

&amp; 11. 23.

3. Eph. 7.

1. Coll. 23.

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6. Eph. 21.

4. Coll. 7.

1. Thess. 3.

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taken probably from the model of the Temple : We see our Saviour chose 12 Apostles, and afterwards 70 Disciples; having in that, no doubt, a regard both to the numbers of their Tribes, and of their Sanhedrin : We plainly see, that during the Apostles lives, the governing and ordering of the Church was in them, yet they constituted some in their name to govern a large extent of Churches; and by their Epistles to these, it is plain, that the power of governing those Churches, and of ordaining new Officers in them, belonged to them; they being the persons to whom that trust was committed, with solemn Charges given them for it by the Apostles : We plainly see two distinct Orders of *Bishop* and *Deacon*, as two Sacred Functions that were to labour in the work of the Gospel; and we find by the short Epistles in the beginnings of the *Revelation*, that there was one man who had the Immediate Charge of those Churches, to whom every thing relating to them is addressed, as to a person that was accountable for the rest, and that by consequence must be suppos'd to have an Authority over them : We see immediately

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diately after the days of the Apostles, that all the Churches were cast into one Mould, of *Bishop*, *Priest*, and *Deacon*: This taking place every where, and that at a time when no Meetings of the Clergy could be held to establish any such Form, and that no Laws of Princes were made to Enact it, and no Men of Authority could so early and so universally have brought such a change into the Order of the Church; when there was nothing to tempt any to affect Preheminence; Labour and Sufferings being all that then follow'd this Superior Rank: and yet within less than one Century after the days of the Apostles, we do plainly see, that this was the Constitution, even of those Churches that had been gathered and settled by the Apostles themselves. Among whom so visible a thing as the Order in which they had put the Church, could not possibly be soon forgotten; and this was not complain'd of by the Sects of those days, particularly the *Monanists*, that had so fair an appearance by their praying and fasting so much, that not only *Tertullian* was drawn away by it, but even the Church seems to have taken a tincture from

from some of their Methods; whether in imitation of them, or on design to out-do them, is not so easy to determine; yet nothing of this kind was ever objected, as if the Church had by the Authority given to Bishops, departed from the Apostolical Customs.

Now I will acknowledge, that a bare practice, tho very Ancient; such as the giving the Eucharist to Infants, without a colour for it in Scripture, ought not to conclude us: but when there is a great deal in Scripture that looks favourably to a thing, tho the proof from the words alone should not seem full and positive, and when the first Writings and clearest Practices of the Ages that immediately follow'd, confirm such an Exposition, then we have all that is possible for us to pretend to, for giving a fixed and determinate sense to such passages. From all this then it is clear, that we are now upon the same Constitution as to the main, on which the Apostles settled the Churches, and that we have all the reason that a thing of this nature is capable of, to conclude, That the distinction of *Bishop*, *Priest* and *Deacon*, was settled by the Apostles

postles themselves, and is related to by many places in the *New Testament*.

The division of the World into Diocesses, larger or narrower, as well as of Parishes, some being excessively large, and others as unreasonably small, does not a whit alter the nature of the thing in it self : since tho it were to be desir'd, that Parishes were nearer an equality in point of Labour and Cure ; yet this is an Inconvenience that we must bear, and not disturb the Church, by seeking undue Remedies for it : So such Disorders, as a length of time, a corruption of Manners, a change of Governments, and Civil Policies, has brought into a Constitution, may put it out of our power to procure the Redress of many things, that yet will as little warrant a renting the Body, or dividing the Church upon any such account, as it would justify the lazy Sloth of such as may bring things to a better state, and yet do not set about it, nor do heartily endeavour it.

Another head of Objections is to set forms of Prayer in general, as a stinting of the *Spirit of Prayer* ; of which mention is often made in the *New Testament*, and which ought to have scope given to

to it; since it is a mean to rouse up and quicken heavy minds, which become flat when accustom'd to a constant form of words, that render both the Clergy lazy, and the people dead. But when it is consider'd, that every man's words become a form, to which all the rest of the Assembly is limited; the question then lies naturally between the sudden conceptions of one man, who is often young, rash; without Judgment, and who always speaks on the sudden; and between a form well digested and prepared by a Body of Wise and Good men: Since then the people must be under a form, it may seem much more reasonable that they should be under such a form, than under the other; and that the rather, since we see *Moses*, *David*, and the *Prophets* of old, gave the Jewish Church so many forms, both for Prayers and Praises: We know that in our Saviour's time, the *Jews* had a stated Liturgy of their own; which our Saviour was so far from blaming, that he himself prescribed his Disciples a Form, and compos'd it out of theirs; laying together so many Petitions drawn out of their prayers, as answer'd his end, in appointing



his own : And Praises seeming to be the sublimest Acts of Worship, in which the Soul ought to arise to its highest Elevation ; it is not easily accountable why so much excitation should be requir'd in Prayer, while men are left to be still flat and formal in their Praises. It is not to be deni'd, but that among the extraordinary Gifts that follow'd the wonderful Effusion of the Holy Ghost, one was, That men were Inspir'd to offer up such Prayers to God as comprehended the necessities of whole Congregations ; it appearing in those Prayers, that the Spirit in him that pray'd, searched all their hearts, and so did prompt him with groanings that were unutterable ; and it thus appearing, that the *Spirit*, or *Inspiration* which moved any to pray in this sort, *searched all things* ; every man finding the sense of his own heart thus open'd, together with suitable Intercessions, it was from thence evident, that this was the *Spirit of God*, making Intercession for the Saints, in the mouth and words of the Inspir'd Person. This being a plain account of those words of *praying in or by the Spirit*, and well agreeing with every thing said concerning it in the

8. Rom.  
28, 29.

the *New Testament*, it is a great mistake, if we in these days, should expect any such Assistances from God : So that now a readiness of new or tender Expressions in Prayer, is an effect of a quickness of Thought, a liveliness of Imagination, together with a good Memory, much conversant in Scripture-Phrases, and long practised in that way. All things by a long use grow flat to minds that are not seriously awaken'd; but extemporary Prayers do rather kill than feed true Devotion, since they must be hearkened to as Discourses, which is a distraction to him that prays after them, whereas those accustom'd to set-forms, have only the things themselves that their Devotion relate to in their view; so they are certainly less tempted to distraction, than they must be who follow the other way.

Those sudden starts that are given to the mind by soft Words, and melting Images of things, may be according to the different Compositions of men more or less useful to them in their secret Exercises, but they ought not to be let in upon publick Assemblies, which being made up of a great variety of Tempers,

must be entertain'd only with such Devotions that suit with all their Conditions, and do equally quadrate to all their necessities ; and thus it is not only natural, but necessary for all men who will maintain Order in their Worship, and will frame it in so diffus'd an extent, as to take all equally within it, that they have set and stated Forms; and these ought to be cast into the plainest and most comprehensive simplicity possible, since that is always suited to all Mankind, whereas men are vastly diversifi'd in every thing that is lively or fanciful. Such a way of Worship ought neither to be unreasonably long, nor excessively short. The length must be proportion'd to what the greater part of Mankind can bear ; it ought also to be so diversifi'd, that mens minds be not kept too long at any one part of it, or their bodies in any one posture ; and there should be as great a compass in it, for taking in the several Acts and Offices of Devotion, as may be ; and in all these respects, it may be safely affirmed, That our Forms have as few defects, are as little liable to Objections, and are indeed as perfect , not only as the Forms or Liturgies of any Church

Church that we know of, Ancient or Modern, but are as perfect as we can in reason expect in any thing that came from men not immediately inspir'd. Any small exceptions that may be made, as they do all admit of very good Answers, so can never be put in the ballance with the Peace and Order of the Church, and the Edification that the Members of our Body might receive from such Pure and Spiritual Devotions. If men grow too languid and flat in them, even this is much more supportable than the gross Affectations, and the scandalous Indecencies that are so common, to say no worse, in the tumultuary way. Man is indeed so made, that he grows soon corrupt and dead in what method soever he is put : but as Mankind bears the longest and the most generally with common food, and is less disgusted at the continuance of it, than it would be with more chosen Delicacies, which would become much sooner nauseous than simpler Nourishment ; so it may be positively affirm'd, that grave and well-compos'd Devotions, fitly diversifi'd, and often broken, as ours are, have not only Reason and Authority clearly on their side, but have great Advantages.



tages in them, and few disadvantages to ballance those. They are such as are proper for us to offer up to God; they have in them all the Gravity and Solemnity that becomes a Religious Assembly; they comply with our very Infirmities, and give us such breathings as may be necessary for loose and vagrant minds; and they carry in them the whole Complex of a Religious Service: so in going that round with due degrees of Attention, we are sure we offer up to God the several Branches of that *Reasonable Service*, or *Rational Worship*, that we owe him.

12. Rom. I.

The more particular exceptions lie chiefly against our forms in the two Sacraments: The *Anabaptists* object our not *dipping* when we *baptize*; which was not only the practice of Christ and his Apostles, but seems to be recommended by the Mystical Allusions made to the being *buried* in the Water, and the being again *raised up* out of it, as was formerly observ'd. Indeed if we could think that a divine Vertue follow'd the application of the water only to the parts washed with it, so that there were a sort of a Charm in it, we must acknowledge our Baptism to be defective: but since *Wa-*

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ter is only us'd as an Emblem of the Purity of our Religion, it seems in the nature of things to be all one, whether the person baptized is put into the water, or if the water is put upon him. The design of Baptism is a Federal Sponson, upon which water is to be us'd, with a determined form of words; and when these are observed, all that is primarily intended in it, is observed; nor will Allusions made to the Rites with which this was at first managed, prove that those ought to be perpetual, these being only devout and instructive Thoughts offer'd upon the occasion of such forms. Yet after all, our Church is so little liable to censure in this matter, that the Rule given in the *Rubrick* is first for *dipping*; *sprinkling* is only allowed of; so that tho it comes to be more commonly practised, yet no person that desires it in the form of *dipping* can be denied it among us, since it is the form that is chiefly favoured by the *Rubrick*, tho the practice runs in a current the other way.

There is a more important Scruple rais'd upon Infant Baptism, since the persons mention'd to be baptized in the Scriptures were all of Age, capable to answer  
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and promise for themselves ; and since by the Institution of Baptism, the *making of men Disciples* is set before it, and the *teaching them to observe all that Christ hath commanded* comes immediately after it, both these seem to be Characters importing that they should be of an Age capable of Instruction, since They only can make *the answer of a good Conscience* : so that the baptizing upon a Vow or Promise made by another, seems to be a new sort of Fœderal Sponson, not instituted by Christ, and by consequence not warranted by the Gospel. Nor will the Argument from Circumcision appear conclusive, when it is consider'd that Females not being capable of it, that Rite seems rather to have been a national Mark, to distinguish them as *Abraham's Posterity* from other Nations, than a Rite relating to the Blessings of a future state.

But to all this we must answer, That since our Saviour took Baptism from the *Jews*, it being visible that they were not at all surprized at *St. John Baptist's* baptizing, they only questioning him upon his Mission and Authority for it ; we have reason to conclude, that he took it from them as they practis'd it : And we find  
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by their Writings, that when any Profelytes came over to their Religion, they not only baptized them, but also their Children. This being their practice, and our Saviour making no Exceptions as to this Particular, but saying words that plainly favour it, *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the Kingdom of God*, or the Gospel-dispensation, this is no small Argument for it : But that which seems to determine the matter, is the resolution that St. Paul gives in a Case that must have been very common in those days, when one of the married Parties was converted to Christianity, the other remaining still in Infidelity, he determines that the Husband ought not to put away the Wife, nor the Wife leave the Husband; and the reason he adds is, That there was a communication of *Sanctification* from the believing to the unbelieving Party, which descended to their Children, who should be *otherwise Unclean*, but *now they were Holy*. Now it is to be considered, that in the New Testament *Holy*, or *Saint*, and a *Christian*, stand promiscuously for one another; and the word *Holy*, can only signify either a real inward

10. Mark  
13.

1 Cor. 7.  
14.



inward Holiness, or a Holiness of dedication, in which sense all things appropriated to God are said to be *Holy*. A Believer could not communicate a real Holiness either to the unbelieving Yoke-fellow, or to the Issue, since that is personal, and cannot be derived, or descend. The only *Holiness* that he could derive, was a right to consecrate the common Issue to God; which is in some sort a *sanctifying* of one another. This is a plain and natural meaning of these words; and tho they should not seem to import it so necessarily, but that other glosses might be put upon them, yet the early practice of the Church mention'd by *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and most copiously by *St. Cyprian*, seems to be a sure Commentary upon them, this being a ritual and visible thing, in which we may much more safely have recourse to Tradition, than in matters of Doctrine; it being here remembred, That a Practice without warrant in Scripture, is not to be so regarded as a Practice that seems to have favourable, if not clear warrants for it in Scripture. This also agrees with the natural Order of the World: Children being put in the power of their Parents, by the Laws of Nature, who,

who, considering their Incapacity, must act in their Name, and may both procure Rights and Priviledges to them, and also lay ties and engagements upon them. It is then suitable to the extent of the mercy of God in the Gospel, that Parents may offer up their Children to Christ, that they may be tied by them to his Religion, and received into the blessings and privileges of it. When this whole matter is thus laid together, I doubt not but the lawfulness of Infant-Baptism will evidently appear; and if it is *lawful*, then according to what was at first made out, the Church may oblige all her Members to it.

The Practice of having Sponsors, being but an increase of the security given for the person's education in Christianity, the care of the Parents being supposed, as already bound upon them by their natural Relation to their Children, and it being a great mean, if well managed, of knitting Neighbours together in new and Christian Bonds, all Exceptions to such a Custom seem very ill-grounded; and their answering so positively in the Name of the Child, does according to the nature of all Acts in the Name of Infants, im-  
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port only, that as far as in them lies, care shall be taken that the Infant shall make good those engagements in due time. Our affirming so positively, That all Children who are baptized, and die before they grow to be capable of committing any actual Sin, are certainly saved; does not only agree with the Idea's of the infinite goodness of God, but also with this declaration, That the Promises of the Gospel are made *to all Christians, and to their Children.*

2. Acts  
39.

The most general Scruple against our Form in Baptism, remains yet to be discussed: That we have added to it the Sign of the Cross, which is a piece of Popish Superstition. Indeed, if we used it as was formerly observed, as they do, with an adjuration of the Devil to go out, and *not to presume to violate the Sign of the Cross*; if we breathed *cross-ways*, and pretended by that to infuse Divine Virtues and Blessings, here were just objections; for in so doing, we should assume a power to make Sacraments, and to affix Divine Powers to Institutions of our own: Therefore nothing of this being retained among us, all the Papistical and Superstitious use of the Cross in

in Baptism is thrown out : But since the Primitive Christians did so glory in the Cross, that instead of being ashamed of the Reproach of it, they used it upon most occasions : Our Reformers designing to restore Primitive Christianity, thought, that though the abuse of this to so much Superstition, made them supercede the frequent practise of it ; yet in this first initiation to Christianity, it was reasonable to use it, once for all, but with words that shewed they retained none of the Superstitious Conceits of Popery, and meant only thereby to own the receiving all Christians into the Doctrine of the Cross, and to an obligation to follow Christ, bearing his Cross. And thus it is plain, that this practise is in it self not only innocent, but decent : and that there were very plausible Reasons, to say no more, for enjoining it ; so that the not using it, is the disobeying a just Authority, in a lawful Injunction.

*Kneeling in the Eucharist*, seems not only liable to an imputation of Idolatry ; but is also under this further prejudice, that it is in none of the Ancient Rituals : On the contrary, we have all reason to believe, that for many Ages they did communicate *standing* : since all *kneeling*  
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in Churches on *Sundays*, or in the time between *Easter* and *Whitsunday*, was esteemed a crime in *Tertullian's* time, and was forbidden by a Canon of the Council of *Nice*.

This being that, of all the Objections raised against us, that touches in the tenderest part, since this is the great Symbole of the Union of Christians, and that in which most formally *the Communion of the Church* consists, it will be necessary to examine it very narrowly. It is then, first, to be considered, that outward Actions do signify only that which by a general consent, or an express declaration is agreed on as their sense and importance. *Kneeling* to Kings, is understood to be only the highest Act of Civil Respect; and therefore it is liable to no imputation of *Idolatry*: Therefore if there is an express declaration made of the importance of this Action, that it is neither an Adoration of the Bread and Wine, nor of the Person of Christ, as supposed Corporally present, but only a worshipping of God in the acknowledgment of the great Blessings there exhibited to us, then this Posture cannot be stretched beyond this express Declaration; nor is this that *kneeling* which is enjoined by the Church of *Rome*; for that is only a falling down at the

the *Elevation*, in acknowledgment of the miraculous change then made : Whereas ours is a continued posture of *Prayer*, in which we continue during the whole Office : So that *Kneeling*, as used by us, does in many respects differ from the *Kneeling* used in the Church of *Rome*.

As for that specious Pretence, That in the Primitive times they did not *kneel* at the receiving the Sacrament ; it is only an appearance of a Reason. In the Primitive times, they had a notion of *Kneeling* as an abject Posture ; which only became *Penitents*, or the times of *fasting* : They thought that upon other occasions *standing* in Prayer had an appearance of faith and confidence in God ; and agreed with those comfortable assurances, and that joy to which we are called in the Gospel : And therefore those who were in the full *peace of the Church*, were to *stand* up at Prayers ; which was most indispensably observed on Sundays, and the 50 days from *Easter* to *Pentecost*. But *standing* was then their posture of Prayer, so they received the Sacrament in the posture appropriated to prayer ; and it were easy to shew, from those very Fathers who mention *standing* as the posture in which the Eucharist was received, that



they did consider it as a posture of *Adoration*, and so required all Christians to *adore* as they received it. Now in a course of many Ages, this difference of several degrees in Prayer, and the postures proper to them, is quite worn out ; so that *kneeling* is become the common posture of all Prayer whatsoever : Therefore we receiving in a posture of Prayer, do in that follow the constant practice of all Christians, in all the best Ages.

*Kneeling* is a matter merely ritual ; and being now grown the common Rite, expressing our humility in Prayer, we do not depart from the Spirit and Intentions of the Primitive Church ; since we receive the Eucharist in our posture of prayer, as they did it in theirs. The plausible Exception to all this, is, That since our Saviour did institute this Sacrament, *at a Table after Supper*, it is a needless departing from his Practice, and the Pattern that he hath left us, to receive it in any other posture. If this Objection had any force, it should oblige us to receive *leaning along*, according to the posture of sitting at table in those days ; and if we must adhere to the Circumstances of the Institution, the time *after Supper*, and the place *an upper room*, will be as obligatory

gatory upon us as the Posture, since all these things are of the same order and value. But to go to the bottom of this Objection, and to shew by a clear parity the just reason of departing from our Saviour's practice in this particular:

It is to be remembred, That when *Moses* gave out the Institution of the Paschal Festivity, he limited that people by express words to a posture, They were *to eat it with their loins girt, and their shooes* <sup>i2. Exod.</sup>  
*on their feet, with staves in their hands,* <sup>11.</sup>  
 thus ready to march. There is nothing in the Institution that gives the least hint, as if this was not meant to be a lasting Precept: So here is much more than a bare Example, a Precept given in very plain words, without any limitation of time: And yet when the *Israelites* were settled in the Land of *Canaan*, at rest, and no more obliged to march, this change of their Circumstances did, from the natural suitableness of things, bring on a change in this part of that Festivity: They *sate* about their Tables, or rather *leaned*, and so they did eat the Lamb in that lazy posture, that expressed the *Rest* which God had given them. And we are sure, that in this they committed no error; since our Saviour himself

himself justified their practice, by conforming to it. So here more than a bare practice, an express Institution in a ritual matter, is changed by a Church, that in all such things seems to have been much more tied up to the letter of their Law, than the Christian Church is; yet a great alteration in their Circumstances made them conclude, that this ought to be altered, and in that they did right. Now if we will apply this to the *Christian Passover*; Christ being in a state of Humiliation, and in *the form of a Servant*, institutes it; and does it in a familiar posture of Equality with his Disciples at Table, but gives no rule how, as to that particular, it ought to be observed for the future, as *Moses* had done. Afterwards, a vast change happens in his visible Condition; he is raised from the dead, and exalted up into Heaven: Upon this change therefore, with relation to his Human nature, that was vastly more important than that which had had happened to the *Jews* when they were brought into the *Land of Promise*; it seems to have been highly congruous to that practice of the *Jews*, with which the first Christians could not be unacquainted, for them to have changed

changed the posture from the appearance of Familiarity, to that of Respect; and to have brought it to the *Posture* which they used in Prayer, and their other Devotions. And this I think is a full answer to every thing that can be objected to our Posture in Receiving.

Another exception some have to our Administration of this Sacrament, That there is no previous examination of those who are admitted to it; that a promiscuous multitude comes without any notice given, or enquiry made after them;

tho we are commanded *to note such as* <sup>2 Thess. 3.</sup> *walk disorderly, and to have no fellowship* <sup>14.</sup> *with them, that they may be ashamed:* <sup>1 Cor. 5. 11.</sup>

nay, with *Brethren*; that is, Christians who live scandalously, *not so much as to eat.* To this it is to be answer'd, That a great difference is to be made between a Church that lies yet under some defects, which she laments and cannot get them to be effectually supplied, and a Church that is viciously faulty, and blameable in any thing she does. If the acts of Church-Communion are in themselves lawful and good, so that particular persons are obliged to nothing that can be made appear to be unlawful; it can be no reason for them to separate from it, be-



cause other things are not done which perhaps are fitting and may seem necessary. But a further distinction is to be made, between things commanded by a Divine Precept, and such things as are only recommended by the Practice and Rules of the Church. St. Paul does only prescribe this, That *every man examine himself*, but does not impose it upon any to examine others; and the true Importance of the word render'd *Examine*, is *Approve*: that is, Let a man so consider himself, as to see whether he is *approved* of by his own Conscience: but this gives no other person an Authority to search into, *examine*, or *approve* such as come to the Sacrament. There is therefore no Rule given in the *New Testament* for any such previous enquiry: it was indeed a very Ancient, and is upon very many accounts a good and useful practice so to do. But how criminal soever a defect in obeying a Divine Law may be, it can be no such matter not to observe even the ancientest Rules of the Church, that after all, do rest only upon a human Authority: Those rules concerning scandalous persons, belong to the Body in general; and if there should be Errors and male-Administrations, the Body, or rather its Pastors

1 Cor. II.  
28.

Pastors when in a Body, are accountable for that, and not the Individuals of the Society, who cannot be further concern'd in them, than to lament such defects, and to use their best endeavours to help them to be redressed; so this can never justify a separation, because there may be erroneous or scandalous men in a Society, who are too much connived at.

St. *Paul* finds great fault with many Errors; some bad Practices and Scandals among the *Corinthians*; yet tho in one case he thunders a severe Sentence upon a more eminently scandalous man, he never so much as insinuates that the rest of the body should separate themselves from those erroneous or irregular men: On the contrary, he presses the Obligations to Unity, most vehemently on the *Corinthians*; tho that was the Church which he charged the most severely of all others, both with Errors, Disorders in Worship, and scandalous Practices.

It was no wonder, If after the Church of *Rome* had enervated the whole Ancient Discipline, and had turn'd it all to be a secret practice between the Priest and the Penitent in Auricular Confession; and that Dispensations and Commutations were brought in, by which men knew the

the price of sin, and how to buy it off, that all of the sudden this Church could not be brought back to the Primitive Constitution: tho we see that our Reformers did sincerely intend it, and prepared a Model for it. But our bad Circumstances have made, that this great and good Design could never be effected since that time; for which we still continue to make a publick Acknowledgment in the Preface to the *Office of Communion*. But after all, How faulty soever particular persons may be in not obeying the Rules of the Church, the Clergy are obliged to Catechise the Youth, and when they are duly prepared for it, they ought to offer them to the Bishop to be *Confirm'd*; and this ought to precede their being at first admitted to the Sacrament. If this is not duly and punctually executed, it is the fault of those who fail in their Duty; and one of the best and most effectual Answers that we can make to this prejudice, is to endeavour to do in this point, what lies in us, towards the Instructing and Confirming the Youth. As for the Scandals of men's lives, much more certainly might be done, both in the way of private admonition, and publick censure, than is done; so here the

the best answer will still return upon us: We ought to do all that is incumbent on us, for watching over those that are committed to our Care, for correcting their Manners, for making the incorrigible ashamed, and for cutting off corrupt and gangreen'd Members, that they spread not their Infection to those that are yet sound. Yet if another man fail of his Duty, that can never excuse any one from doing his; and so it can never be a just ground of separation.

Some except to our habit, as a Ceremony taken from the Service of the Jewish Temple; and this, tho it is now esteem'd the least considerable of all the exceptions made against us, yet was that which first began those unhappy disputes, that have since increased so fatally upon us. The chief thing stood upon at first, was, That it was a compliance with the Superstitions of Popery; but this has been consider'd already; to which I shall in this place only add this one Consideration more to justify those Compliances in matters that are in themselves innocent; That in Fact, the body of this Nation was in a very few years brought off from Popery; to which it is highly probable, that those small Compliances contributed  
not



not a little ; so that the single reason upon which this was at first oppos'd, was the chief Reason for its continuance.

All publick Functions are perform'd in some special Habits ; and *White* being, among both *Greeks* and *Romans*, the colour that expressed *Joy*, it bearing also a Signification of Purity and Innocence, it was natural for the Primitive Christians, both to put such as were newly baptized in *white*, and also to have Divine Offices perform'd by persons habited in the same manner. It is true, Popery had brought in much Superstition upon all this ; the several parcels of the habits were deliver'd with particular Devotions in the conferring of Orders ; which imported a peculiar Virtue and Sanctity to be in them, and they were to be us'd with such constant Devotions, that did all signify that a Sacramental Virtue was believ'd to be lodg'd in them. Now all this was taken away by our Reformers ; only for the decency of Worship, in compliance with Ancient Practices, they retain'd the Habits themselves ; and since the greatest bodies of those who divide from us, have us'd *black Gowns*, which is both a peculiar form of a Habit, and in a special Colour, that signifi'd Gravity,

vity, it will not be easy to find a good reason, why a peculiar Habit in a Colour that expressed both Innocence and Joy, might not be as well us'd. If we pretended that Innocence is by this convey'd to us, here were a just exception; but we using it only as a decent Habit, that is enjoin'd by Law, it is enough to justify our Obedience, if the thing is lawful; and it is enough to justify the Law, if this Robe was Ancient, and have in it a proper expression of that temper of mind, in which we ought to be, when we go to perform Divine Offices.

And thus it appears on how weak grounds the first disputes concerning Rituals among us were begun; upon the progress of which, and the effects that have followed upon them, one can never reflect without remembering those words of St. James, *Behold how great a matter a little fire hath kindled.* 3. Jam. 5.

Some have excepted to our observing *Holy-days*, as if this was an Invasion upon that Liberty which the 4th. Commandment gives for *work*, all the *six days of the week*; and as if men pretended to an Authority to make any parcels of time *Holy*. Some quarrel with the days for the honor of the Apostles, as if this was

was a remnant of Popery : others except even to the observance of *Christmas* and *Ascension-day*, together with those other days that relate to our Saviour himself ; as if the observing them were a reproaching the Apostles with want of regard to the *person of Christ*, which we pretend to supply. But those words of *six days labour*, are not to be understood as a perpetual Command, otherwise God himself had appointed a violation of this, by all those other days of *Rest* that were enjoined the *Jews*, all which were called *Sabbaths*. Every seventh year was to be one continued *Sabbath*; Therefore the Importance of the 4th. Commandment is only this, That when that Precept was first given, God left Mankind free for six days, and only reserved a seventh for Rest and Religion : but that did not limit himself, nor all other Lawful Powers, from making further Impositions for Rest and Religious Exercises. It is also certain, that men cannot make a *day holy* in one sense, that is, affix a special Purity, or particular Virtue to any one day ; but the larger sense of a *holy day*, being a day dedicated to Religious Exercises, it seems to be in the power of every Society  
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to appoint such Anniversary days, as well as to appoint special times of Fasting and Thanksgiving upon one particular day, and for one turn: for since all do agree, that this may be done for once, the Arguments from the 4th. Commandment, and against appointing a *holy day*, are out of doors: so it remains only to consider, whether Anniversary Days may be appointed.

We see the *Jews*, during the seventy <sup>7. Zech. 5.</sup> years of the Captivity, observ'd the Fast of <sup>8. Zech.</sup> the 4th. the 5th. the 7th. and the 10th. <sup>19.</sup> Month; and the Prophet expostulating in the Name of God upon that Head, does neither except to the Imposition, nor the fixing Anniversaries, but only complains of their being ill kept; which plainly imports the acceptance of them, if well kept. The *Jews* also fixed one Anniversary in commemoration of their Deliverance from *Haman's* wicked designs against them; and another for remembering the Purifying the Temple from its Idolatrous Defilement by *Antiochus Epiphanes*. <sup>9. Esther 21. 27.</sup> This last was observed <sup>10. John 21.</sup> by our Saviour, at least we find him in the Temple on that day. Now can any reason be assign'd, either from the nature of things, or from any special limitations in



in the Scripture, that should restrain the Power that is naturally in every body of men, for appointing things of this nature ?

The commemorating the Dispensation of the Gospel committed to the Apostles, has nothing of the Superstition of Popery in it : No Invocations or Addresses being made to them, and no Sacraments administered for their Honor, or recommended to their Intercession. God is only blessed for those several Dispensations, of which they were made the Channels and Instruments. But we ought rather to be concern'd, That these Commemorations are practic'd in so slight a manner, that we seem much more liable to an Objection upon that account ; and tho in the first fervour of Christianity, in which those early Converts lived almost wholly in the Meditations of Christ, and of what related to him, some Institutions of days for more special Remembrances of particular Circumstances had not been made, there might have been very good reason for the succeeding Ages to have studied to keep alive that fervour by such appointments of days, for the more solemn Commemoration of such signal Blessings : and tho there were not the same clear warrants from Antiquity for every one of these, yet it was still in the Power of the Church to make such  
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new Orders, as should seem necessary for carrying on the main Design of Religion.

The Ancient Church thought that the whole fifty days between *Easter* and *Pentecost* ought to be kept with a special Solemnity of Rejoycing, for the Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour, and for the Effusion of the Holy Ghost; since some more particular Devotions on those heads, during that whole time, did not break off the labours of their other Employments, nor interrupt the common business of life; upon the same parity of reason they might appoint some time before that season of Joy, to be spent in confessing past sins, and mourning for them in higher degrees of *Prayer* and *Fasting*. This being only the prescribing a method for appropriating such Exercises in Devotion to the several seasons of the year, an over-valuing of these things, together with a nice distinction of Meats, was a piece of Superstition which might corrupt that which was good in any Constitution. The distinction of Meats for that season, is among us founded meerly on a Law of the Land, for Civil and Political Ends; since the Church only recommends *Prayer* and *Fasting* in general, without any further Specialties as to the measure of the Fast; so no just exception lies

to any part of this whole matter, concerning days and times appropriated to particular Exercises. I wish our Practice in these were such, that this part of our Constitution were not too evidently a matter of Form, and observed with too visible a slightness.

And thus I have gone round all that I remember ever to have met with in Books or Discourses from any of the *Dissenters*, except from those call'd *Quakers*, against our Constitution, and have offer'd you those answers, which to me after the most impartial search that I am capable of, seem fully to satisfy 'em all. It remains, That I consider such as are offer'd by those who are called *Quakers*.

First, They are against all sorts of stated Forms; their main Principle being, That nothing is to be done by us, by virtue of any outward warrant, unless there is an inward excitation or opening of the Spirit that leads to it; And therefore all fixed Rules being contrary to the freedom of the Spirit, they are against them all. But either this Principle must have some limitation to restrain it, or it will cast open a door to subvert all Religion and Policy; for those inward Excitations being only known to those who have them, every man's word must be taken concerning them. If then a man by affirming that he had, or had not, such

such or such an excitation, will be thereby justified or excus'd; then he may do, or not do what he will, and the whole Order of Religion, Morality and Civil Society will be thereby dissolv'd: but if they say, that there is that Harmony between the secret leadings of the Spirit and the Scriptures, that whatsoever is commanded in the one, is always witnessed to by the other; then we are to examine this matter by the Scriptures, and to conclude, That if there are rules given in them for the constant use of the Sacraments, then they are hereby condemned who have laid them aside.

Our Saviour encourag'd his Apostles to go and execute the Commission that he gave them, to make Disciples, and baptize all Nations; with this Promise, *That he was* 28. Mat. *to be with them alway, even to the end of the* 20. *World.* The promise is given as an encouragement to the duty enjoin'd; and from hence we may conclude, that the precept of Baptism must continue likewise to the end of the World. To this we must join those other words of our Saviour, *Except a man is* 3. John 3. *born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,* which is affirmed without any limitation of time. By the Kingdom of Heaven is plainly meant the Dispensation of the Gospel; and since Bap-  
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16. Mark  
16.

*tism* was then practised, and was well understood by them, who were born *Jews*, nothing in reason can be understood by the being *born of water and of the spirit*, but the being initiated by *Baptism*, and the being inwardly Sanctified: The one as well as the other, is made indispensably necessary to the being a *member* of this new Dispensation. St. *Mark* also has recorded those words of our Saviour: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*: Now since *Baptism* is only enjoined by a *Precept*, and is not necessary as a *mean*, but only as an act of Obedience; therefore tho the doing it is commanded in order to *Salvation*, yet *Damnation* is not the consequent of its not being done, since one may be prevented in it by death; or other Impossibilities may put it out of his power to procure *Baptism* to himself: And therefore, as the one branch of this period shews the obligation laid on us to be baptized in order to *Salvation*, so the leaving it out in the other branch, shews that our not coming within the rites of our Religion, when that failure is no fault of ours, does not exclude us from *Salvation*, or bring us to a state of *Damnation*.

In the beginnings of Christianity, the  
wonderful

wonderful effusion of the *Holy Ghost* was thought a true reason for baptizing such persons on whom it fell; and therefore St. Peter said, when the *Holy Ghost* fell visibly on *Cornelius* and his Friends, *Can any man forbid water, that those should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* And with this he settled the minds of those who were a little offended at that action. This shews that no pretence to a *high dispensation of the Spirit*, can evacuate that Precept; since, on the contrary, an evidence of the giving the *Holy Ghost*, was pleaded as an Argument for baptizing: Nor does any one passage in which Baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, limit it to that time, and intimate that it belonged only to the beginnings of Christianity, or that it was to determine when it was more fully settled; so that this, with the constant practice of all succeeding Ages, without a shadow of any Exception, must conclude us as to this Point.

Our Saviour did also appoint the other Sacrament to be continued in remembrance of him; by which St. Paul says, we shew forth his death till he come. Now these words cannot be understood of any supposed inward and spiritual coming, since

10. Acts  
47.  
11. Acts  
17.

1 Cor. 11.  
26.

the most signal coming in that sense, was the effusion of the Holy Ghost at *Pentecost*, and yet after that time the Apostles continued to practise it, and delivered it to the Churches as a Precept still obligatory, till *Christ should come*. If then we ought still to remember him, and *shew forth his death*; if it is the *Communion of his Body and Blood*; if it is the new Covenant in his Blood for the remission of sins; then as long as these things are Duties incumbent on us, so long we must be under the obligation of *eating that Bread, and drinking that Cup*.

4. Ephes.

11, 12, 13,

14.

Further, If Christ has left different Gifts to different Orders of men, *some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, and for edifying the Body of Christ, till we come unto a perfect man, and are no more in danger of being tossed to and fro, and carried away with every wind of doctrine*. These words do plainly import, That as long as mankind is under the frailties of this present state, and in this confused Scene, that some of these Orders must still be continued in the Church, and that those Rules and Precepts given to *Timothy and Titus* concerning such as were to be ordained

*Bishops*

*Bishops* or *Elders*, that is, *Priests* and *Deacons*, were to be lasting and standing Rules; for indeed if the design had not been to establish that Order for the succeeding Ages, there was less need of it in that, in which there was such a plentiful measure of the Spirit poured out upon all Christians; that such Functions in that time might have been well spared, if it had not been for this, that they were then to be settled under the Patronage, if I may so speak, of the Apostles themselves, from whom they were to receive an Authority, which how little necessary soever it might seem in that wonderful time, yet was to be more needed in the succeeding Ages.

1 Tim. 3.  
1. Tit. 1.

Therefore we may well conclude, That whatsoever was ordered concerning those Offices or Officers of the Church, in the first Age, was by a stronger parity of reason to be continued down through all the Ages of the Church; and in particular, if in that time in which Women received the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that some prophesied, and others *laboured much in the Lord*, that is in the Gospel; yet St. Paul did in two different Epistles, particularly restrain them from teaching or *speaking in the Church*; to which he adds, *That it was a shame for Women to speak in the*

1 Cor. 14.  
34, 35.  
1 Tim. 2.  
11.



*Church*; that is, it might turn to be a reproach to the Christian Religion, and furnish Scoffers with some colours of exposing it to the scorn of the Age. This was to be much more strictly observed, when all those extraordinary Characters, that might seem to be exemptions from common Rules, did no longer continue.

As for those distinctions into which they have cast themselves, of the *Hat*, and the denying Titles, and speaking in the singular *Thou* and *Thee*, it is to be considered, That how unfit soever it be, and how unbecoming Christians to be conformed to this world, yet it rather lessens than heightens the great Idea that the world ought to have of the Christian Religion, when it states a diversity among men about meer Trifles. Our Saviour and his Apostles complied as much in all innocent Customs, as they avoided all sinful ones. *Honour to whom honour is due*, is a standing Duty; and though the *bowing the Body*, and *falling prostrate*, are postures that seem liker Idolatry, and more abject in their nature than the *Hat*; yet the very Prophets of God paid these respects to Kings. Outward Actions or Gestures signify only what is intended to be expressed, and what is generally understood by them;

13. Rom.  
7.

1 Sam. 20.

41.

1 Sam. 24.

8.

1 Kings 1.

23.

them ; so that what is known to be meant  
 only for a piece of Civil respect, can never  
 be stretched to a Religious respect ; and  
 though that abject homage under which  
 the *Jewish* Rabbies had brought their Dis-  
 ciples, and which they had exprest in Titles  
 that imported their profound submission  
 to them, was reproved by our Saviour ;  
 yet we see that the word *Kue*, *Sir*, or *Lord*,  
 was then used as commonly as we  
 now do ; since *Mary Magdalen* called him,  
 whom she took for a Gardener, *Sir*, or  
*Lord*. And *St. Paul* gave *Festus* the Title  
 which belonged to his Office, it being  
 the same that *Claudius Lysias* gave *Felix*,  
 who certainly was not wanting in that ;  
 and that being the Title of men of Rank,  
*St. Luke* addresses both his Books to *The-*  
*ophilus*, designing him in one of them in  
 the same manner. Words signify nothing  
 of themselves, as they are meer sounds,  
 but according to the signification in  
 which men agree to use them ; so if the  
 speaking to one man in the plural num-  
 ber, is understood only as a more respect-  
 ful way of treating him, then the plural is  
 in this case really but a singular. Indeed  
 these things scarce deserve to be so nar-  
 rowly lookt into.

23. Mat. 8,  
 9, 10.

20. John  
 15.  
 26. Acts  
 25.  
 23. Acts  
 26.  
 1. Luk. 3.

The Scruple against Swearing, is more  
 im-

important both to them and to the Publick. They have indeed the appearance of a plain Command of our Saviour's against all manner of Swearing, which is repeated by St. James; but this must be restricted to their communication, according to the words that follow, since we find *Swearing* not only commanded in the Old Testament, but practised in the New. The Apostles swear, at every time they say *God is witness*; and more solemnly, *when God is called for a record upon their Soul*. The Angel of God *lifts up his hand; and swears by him that lives for ever and ever*. God swears by himself, and an Oath for confirmation, that is, for affirming any matter, *is the end of all Controversy*. We find our Saviour himself answered upon Oath, when adjured by the High Priest to tell, If he was the Christ, the Son of the most high God; for according to the Mosaical Law, *when any Soul sinned, and heard the voice of Swearing, that is of Adjuration, and was a witness whether he hath seen it or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity*; that is, he shall be guilty of Perjury. It were easy to shew from several passages of the Old Testament, That Superiors, whether Parents or Princes, could put others under a Curse,

5. Mat. 34.

5. Jam. 12.

1. Rom. 9.

1 Thess.

2. 10.

2 Cor. 1.

23.

10. Rev.

5, 6.

6. Hebr.

16, 17, 18.

5. Lev. 7.

1 Sam. 14.

24, 38, 39.

17. Judg.

2.

Curse, and by that either bind them in a Promise or Vow, or oblige them to declare the truth. This being then the custom of the *Jews*, our Saviour, though silent, as long as it was free to him to speak or not, he in that shewing his patience and meekness; yet as soon as he was adjured, he then answered; for he was bound by that Oath to declare the truth: Therefore since among the *Jews* the Party did not take the Oath, but was only passive to the Judge that imposed it upon him, those cited words of our Saviour cannot be extended beyond Oaths in communication, that is in common discourse, or the common business of life: For indeed to end all matters by a solemn Appeal to God, is a natural piece of Worship and Religious Adoration.

26. Mat.  
63, 64.

They load us with another prejudice, in which, tho we may seem too much parties to it, yet it is not to be passed over: They call us *Hirelings* for receiving those supports and rewards for our labours that are appropriated to us. Those who run into these Employments only with such views, and desire to be put in a *Priest's Office*, that they may eat a piece of bread, must feel something within them that testifies to the truth of this Imputation: But such as do dedicate

1 Sam. 2.  
36.



1 Cor. 9.  
11, 13, 14.

dicate themselves to the Gospel, and serve at the Altar, may well *live of the Altar*, and of the Gospel, or the reward of the glad tidings that they publish; *for so, saith St. Paul, bath the Lord ordained.* All persons will yield it to be lawful to accept the bounty that is freely offered, by private persons to such as labour among them; so it will not be easy to shew why publick Bodies may not by settled Laws give those bounties for ever, as well as particular persons do it for once. And therefore not to enter upon the discussion of any antecedent right to *Tythes*, it is certain that Publick Laws may appropriate such proportion of Soil, or of its growth, to such uses as they think fitting: And when that is once done, private persons must bear that, even when they do not approve of the use. Those very people think that all Wars are unlawful, and yet they pay Taxes, tho levied in expresse words to carry on a War. Thus then, when any proportion of the growth of a Nation is applied to any use by a Law, that proportion becomes a rent due to the Publick, in consideration whereof, there is a full abatement made, as it is bought and sold: And whosoever purchases with such abatement, can have no right to that for which they paid nothing.

thing. Now it is certain, that no man can pretend to possess himself of that which is not his own; on this colour, that he who does then possess it, has no good Title to it. That man knows that he himself has no right to it, whether the Possessor's Title is good or bad, and that is enough for him not to challenge or invade it: Every man knows that his Tythes are not his, he never bought them; on the contrary, he made a considerable diminution of the price that he would have paid, if the Land had been Tythe-free: And therefore this being of the nature of a Quit-rent, that the Law has laid on an Estate, any opinion that a man may have of the lawfulness of the use to which it goes, can never justify him, who keeps that which is not his own, from the person to whom the Law has appropriated it. If therefore these men would govern themselves by the Maxims of strict Justice, as long as they cannot overcome this scruple, they ought to make no purchases, but where they buy out the whole Increase of the Soil, and pay its full price: And as there are fair portions over the whole Nation, that are *Tythe-free*, this were a way of dealing that would look like a strictness of Conscience, a regard to their own peace, and the quiet and peace of the Society:

Society : By so doing, they should possess nothing that were not their own, and invade nothing that were any other man's.

Thus, I think, I have omitted no material Objection that is made to the terms of Communion among us as to our Worship and Rituals; and I think I have offered sufficient reason, not only to justify the concurrence of all the single Members of our Body in every one of them, but also to justify our Forms and Constitutions in themselves : It is enough to prove that they are *lawful*, to oblige all the Members of the Body or Society to observe them; but the fitness and usefulness of them must also be made out, to justify the Laws and Constitutions that are made concerning them. But tho *lawful* and *unlawful* are severe and rigorous things, and of a fixed and determinate nature; yet *fit* or *unfit* are of a more loose and unstable Order : And in this respect things may have different faces; what is fit in one respect, and at one time, may be much otherwise at other times : And therefore, tho this is not a consideration strong enough to dissolve the Obligations, under which private persons lie to obedience, yet it ought to be well considered by those to whom that care may belong. It is certain, that a long continuance

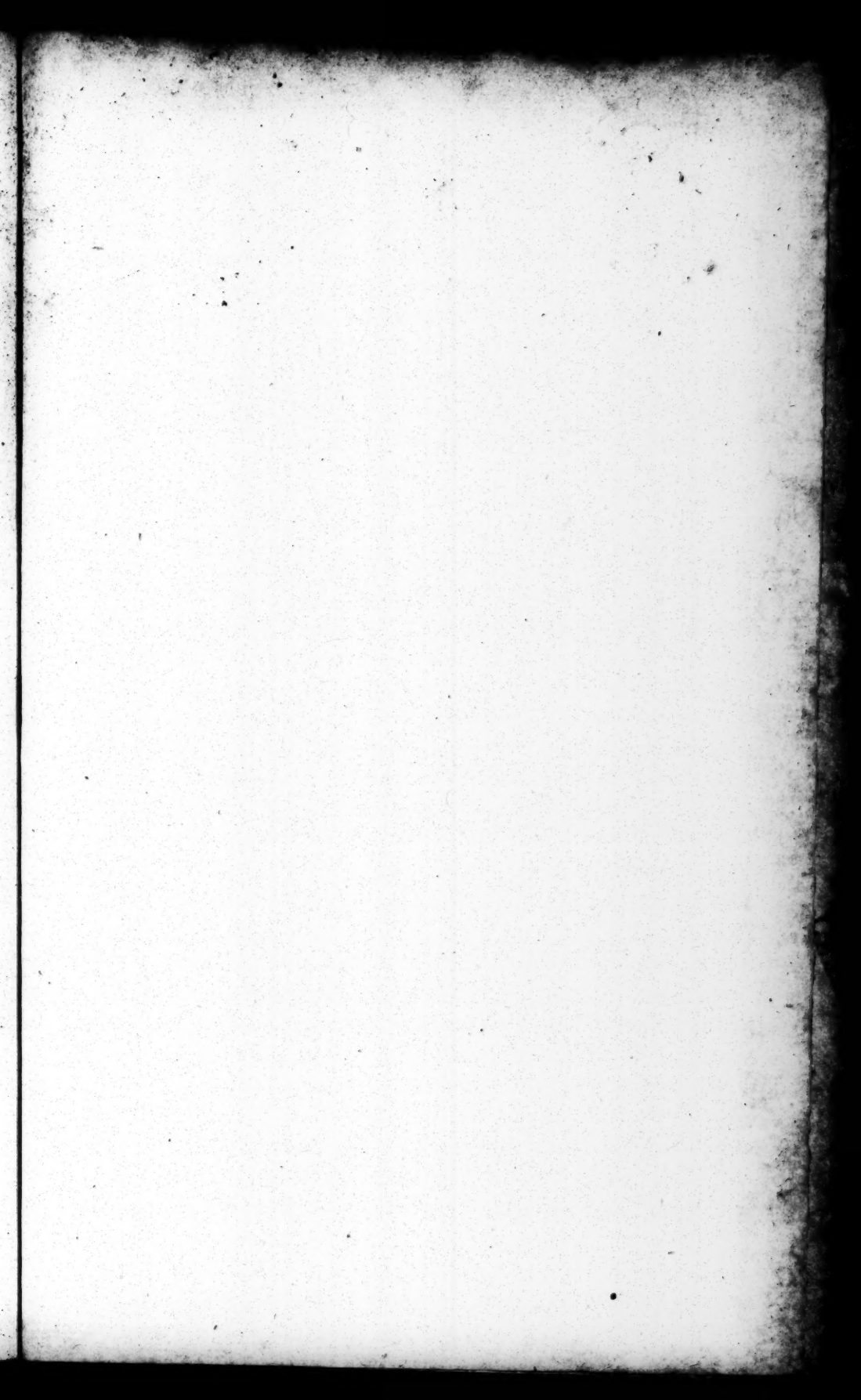
tiuanace of any Custom is a very powerful Argument, enforcing any antecedent fitness that might have been at the first settling of such matters : For all Novelties, as they gratify the levity of more inconstant Minds, so they grate no less upon men of more staid tempers ; who naturally are not given to change : Yet when all things are well weighed, there may be upon some occasions very good reasons for altering some things, which were at first established upon as good and just Considerations ; since there is nothing in any Human Constitution, which comes not from an immediate Divine Authority, that may not be brought under second thoughts, and become the matter of new deliberations.

To conclude, those Divisions from us, and the Prejudices that are raised against us, ought to make us watch the more carefully over our selves, since we have so many severe observers : They ought to oblige us to such an exactness of deportment, and such diligence in our labours, that our behaviour, both in our Persons and Callings, may not inflame and heighten, but on the contrary, very much allay and soften those Prejudices : since after all that is said in the way of Speculation and Argument, the numbers are most wrought on by visible



ble and sensible Prejudices. If we see among those who divide from us, any of the appearances of vertue, in a sober and grave deportment, a modest and humble way of behaviour, a solemn seriousness, the fear of an Oath, a plain simplicity of living, a mutual union and tenderness for one another, and a seeming to be in earnest in the matters of Religion, together with a true strictness in breeding their Youth to understand Religion, and study the Scriptures ; let us not deny that which we see to be true, but let us study to bring our selves, and our people, to outdo them in these things : and to add to these, an exact probity and justice, candor and truth, fidelity and integrity, a meek and gentle behaviour, free from rash censuring, and evil speaking, a universal Charity to all Mankind, a readiness to forgive Injuries, to do good for evil, and a liberality in our bounty to the necessitous ; straitning our selves to relieve others : And if we can bear with them by our charity, as well as the Law tolerates them in their Opinions, we may hope, by the blessing of God, in a competent time to overcome all their Prejudices, and so to heal all our Divisions, and to become of one heart and mind.

*F I N I S.*





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